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THE INDEPENDENT

Wednesday 11 March 1998 45p (R50p) No 3,555 (IN)

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

80 hospitals on Labour hit list

Exclusive

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

THE GOVERNMENT is quietly pushing through a programme of closures and mergers involving scores of hospitals. A survey by *The Independent* has identified more than 80 acute hospitals in England affected by planned closures or transfer of services. In most cases these will lead to larger trusts with a full range of hi-tech specialist skills, but it will also mean patients having further to

travel and will spell the end of many local hospitals.

A total of 32 trusts are due to merge on 1 April in the first wave but many more are discussing sharing services. The scale of the change is greater than anything that has happened in the last decade. A year ago, a leaked report in *The Independent* on Labour's plans for a programme of hospital mergers and closures drew fierce denials from the party and triggered a political storm.

Twelve months on, although proposed changes have triggered some local opposition, their extent has not been recognised. A quiet revolution

is underway which has attracted little public or political comment.

A spokesman at the Department of Health said: "Ministers have made it clear that changes must be driven by local needs."

Stephen Thornton, director of the NHS Confederation representing health authorities and trusts, said: "There is hardly a health authority in the land that is not considering some form of reorganisation of services. They are grasping the nettle at last."

The survey exposes the pressures on the National Health Service as it prepares for survival into the 21st century. Demand for savings to

meet tight budgets is only one of the factors driving change. The pace of medical advance means that care can no longer be delivered safely from small local hospitals but requires the full range of specialties that only a large institution can offer. In addition, changes in working conditions – such as the cut in junior doctors' hours – mean some hospitals are struggling to provide 24-hour cover.

Typical of the changes are Manchester's plan to concentrate acute services at the 800-bed Wythenshawe hospital, which is to be rebuilt, leaving the Withington, currently with 600-beds, as a community hos-

pital. There are similar plans in Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Durham, Derby and Leicester.

Reports by the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Surgeons back the trend towards bigger hospitals serving populations of around 500,000 on the grounds that consultants with larger caseloads have higher standards of care. Christine Hancock, general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said: "The public understands that in specialist units expertise grows with the number of cases and doctors see. If we spread that too thinly, quality suffers."

However, critics say that the strategy is flawed. The Centre for Health Economics at the University of York concluded that there was "no good evidence" that increasing the size of hospitals improved outcomes, and Hay Management Consultants warned that 70 per cent of mergers failed to deliver the required benefits.

Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, announced in a speech last June that the NHS had to be reshaped to survive, with fewer trusts, an end to the duplication of services by neighbouring hospitals and more, basic care provided in GPs' surgeries closer to people's homes. Last month, following an in-

dependent review of hospital closures in London, he announced that most of the changes planned before the election would go ahead – with the exception of St Bartholomew's hospital which won a reprieve.

That has given the green light to other health authorities planning similar closures, mergers and transfers of services. Encouraged by the ending of the culture of competition, doctors and hospital managers have recognised that sharing services with a neighbouring hospital is a better guarantee of survival than protecting their own bricks and mortar.

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Decision to free McAliskey made on political grounds

Exclusive

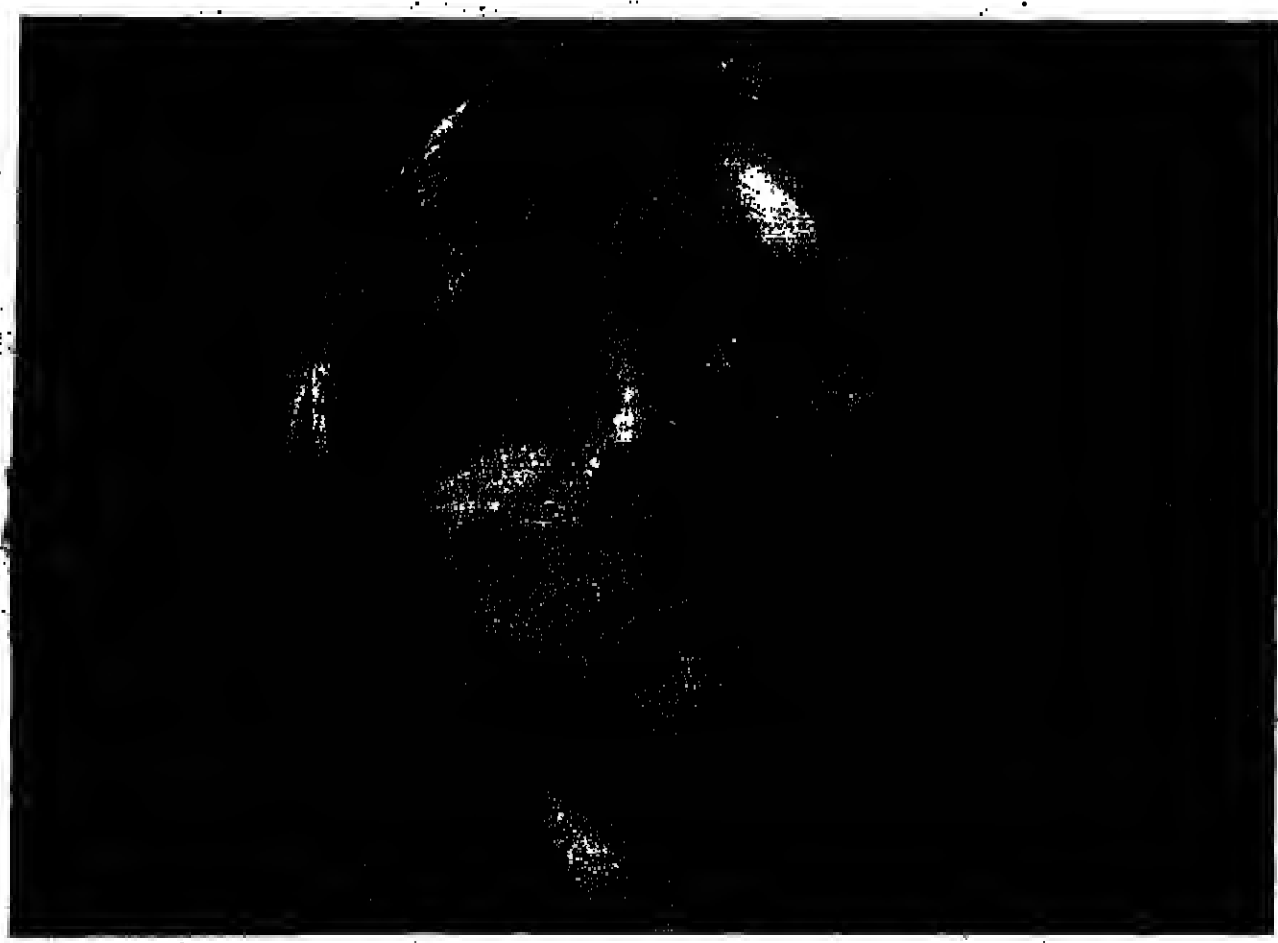
By Steve Boggan
and Andrew Buncombe

A FORMER Solicitor General warned the Government last November that the German bombing case against Roisin McAliskey would not stand up in court but it waited until this week to free her on "health" grounds.

In a private report sent to Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, Lord Archer of Sandwell, who served in the last Labour government, cast doubt on the evidence being used by the German police to extradite Ms McAliskey and concluded: "On the evidence available, it is most unlikely that the Crown Prosecution Service in England would initiate a prosecution."

Despite the clear pointers to Ms McAliskey's innocence, the Government chose to turn down the German extradition request largely on the grounds of her poor health rather than the poor evidence.

Last night, Mr Straw said: "I applied myself as I am required to do by law to the facts of the case and the evidence before me and I took no other considerations into account whatsoever." This conflicts with his statement 24 hours earlier in which he said



Roisin McAliskey's mother Bernadette: she blames her daughter's illness on her treatment. Photograph: David Rose

the "medical evidence in her case would make the extradition unjust and oppressive".

Ms McAliskey's supporters criticised Mr Straw's handling of the case, arguing that the "honourable" course of action would have been to have publicly admitted the weakness of the German case.

Her mother, Bernadette, said Roisin's week-long detention at Castlereagh holding centre after her arrest in November 1996 – without being charged and without a solicitor being present – had severely damaged her daughter psychologically.

"Roisin is ill, and she is ill as a consequence of being arrested and detained in Castlereagh," she said, adding that she planned to sue the Gov-

ernment and the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Ms McAliskey, 26, was accused of taking part in a mortar attack on a British Army barracks in Omagh in June 1996 in which no one was injured. While on remand at Holloway Prison in north London, she gave birth to a daughter, but her psychological condition has deteriorated rapidly, resulting in a diagnosis of "post-traumatic stress disorder".

In his report to Mr Straw, a copy of which has been obtained by *The Independent*, Lord Archer, Solicitor-General from 1974 to 1979, takes apart the German warrant for Ms McAliskey's arrest.

The Germans allege that Ms McAliskey was "Beth", one

of an IRA unit that stayed at a holiday home from 14 to 28 June 1996 while the attack was planned. Police said the owner of the home, Manfred Schmidt, identified her from photographs – yet he has told television interviewers that he did not. Police showed Mr Schmidt three pictures of suspects, something Lord Archer says "seriously compromised" the evidence. Under the English police and criminal evidence rules, a witness must be shown at least 12 photographs.

"In an English court, evidence obtained as this appears to have been almost certainly would be ruled inadmissible," Lord Archer wrote.

The German authorities claim that two fingerprints

found on cigarette packet foil inside the holiday home match Ms McAliskey's. But there is confusion over where exactly the foil was found, and Lord Archer points out that the passing of cigarette packets among smokers is not uncommon and could have happened in Ireland.

"If there were other evidence to be considered, the fingerprint evidence would carry some significance," he wrote. "But standing virtually alone, I doubt whether a UK jury would regard it as the basis for a conviction."

Lord Archer also highlights strong alibi evidence from many witnesses who say they saw Ms McAliskey in Ireland when the Germans allege she was in their country.

£400m missing in water pension fund scandal

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

A GROUP of public-sector pension fund bosses are today accused of crass incompetence, dereliction of duty, and conflict of interest in a scandal which could cost the public more than £300m.

In a devastating report to Parliament, Sir John Bourn, the Comptroller and Auditor General, also warns more than 150 public-sector funds – controlling investments of £100bn – to ensure they learn the lessons from the debacle.

The crisis-racked pension fund was one of three funds set up by the Conservative government as part of the privatisation of the water industry. The newly-privatised water companies' pension funds got £1.2bn in cash and shares, for 50,000 members in new employers' schemes; £221m went into a scheme for 10,000 employees of the National Rivers Authority (NRA); and £812m went to the 39,000 former employees who were left over.

This last scheme – the "closed fund" – got the worst deal, the poorest assets, and the problems, for which the taxpayer will pick up the bill.

Following examination of the events surrounding the creation of the industry's new pension schemes, Sir John's National Audit Office called on the Government to clear up the mess, ensuring benefits for the pensioners "while minimising the extent to which the taxpayer will have to fund any deficit".

But his report leaves two holes: the guilty men are not named; and in spite of the investigative might of the National Audit Office, which is allowed complete access to officials and files, the charge-sheet contains no categorical indictment.

By the end of March last year, the deficit in the problem fund had shot up from £120m to £419m.

Sir John says that when the water industry was privatised, it had been necessary to split up the old Water Authorities Superannuation Fund three ways. The report suggests strongly

that the poor-relation fund, which was also run by the NRA, got the assets no one else wanted, including equity of £102m in Great Portland Estates – in potential breach of a rule that no pension fund should keep more than 10 per cent of its assets in unquoted securities. It was also handed a £27m stake in Charterhouse Estates Ltd, established in 1988 by the old Water Authorities Superannuation Fund and an unnamed "private entrepreneur". That company went bust in 1992.

The report criticised the NRA for appointing Queen

Anne's Gate Asset Management Ltd as investment managers for the fund – without competition – because they had managed the old water authorities' scheme, and they had helped to divide the assets between the three pensions funds.

In today's report, the Government Actuary's Department blames the "closed fund" losses on a £100m fall in the "unbalanced" investment portfolio, and a £160m investment "under-performance", compared with investment returns on pension funds generally.

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Butch the pig carves out a small place in eternity

IT IS A fine line – about to become pork chops one month, and hailed a national hero and immortalised in a statue at a historic cathedral the next, writes Kim Sengupta.

That is the latest achievement of one of the Tamworth Two – famous after successfully fleeing for life and liberty from a slaughterhouse.

Butch the pig has been carved on to a pinnacle to grace the 13th-century Lady Chapel at Hereford Cathedral as part of a £1m restoration plan. The cathedral is also home to Mappa Mundi, one of the earliest maps of the world, and last night the director of the cathedral's Perpetual Trust, Sue Embrey, said: "We now have a 20th-century legend alongside the more



A monument to heroism

ancient legends depicted in the cathedral, it is fabulous carving of his face."

Butch and Sundance made a run for it as they were being

transferred from a van into an abattoir yard in Malmesbury, Wiltshire. They even plunged into the icy waters of the River Avon in their determination to escape. For days afterwards they were celebrated fugitives hunted by a posse of police, animal welfare officials and the media.

The duo were bought up by newspapers and will spend the rest of their lives in comfort at a sty with all mod cons in an animal sanctuary until they die of natural causes.

It is a happy ending, but not for everyone. There was in fact originally the Tamworth Three, including the one they left behind. He was "processed the usual way", and turned into sausages and bacon.

How my beautiful daughter was destroyed by mad cow disease

A father presents moving testimony to the Government's BSE inquiry. Science Editor Charles Arthur reports

TWO AND A HALF years ago, Clare Tomkins was a fit and active 22-year-old, "a stunning strawberry blonde, with a personality to match".

Yesterday, in a harrowing narrative, her father Roger Tomkins relived the agony of the disease which has left his "darling daughter" bed-bound and clinically blind, requiring 24-hour care because she is in constant danger of drowning in her own saliva.

In moving testimony on the second day of the BSE inquiry, Mr Tomkins, an engineering director from Tonbridge, Kent, told how for months doctors and psychiatrists had struggled to produce a diagnosis for the worsening collection of symptoms – such as depression and inability to walk – afflicting his second daughter.

Clare, who is still alive, was eventually diagnosed in August 1997 as having "new variant" Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (v-CJD), almost certainly caused by eating food infected with BSE, or "mad cow disease" – even though she was a strict vegetarian since 1985. After hearing her father speak yesterday, Lord Justice Phillips, who is chairing the inquiry into the causes of BSE and the events leading up to March 1996 – when the last government announced the existence of a link between the two fatal diseases – said: "I felt it was important that your evidence should be given at the start of this inquiry."

At the hearing in London yesterday, many other members of families who have lost members to v-CJD cried as they heard Mr Tomkins' description of his daughter's descent from her normal self.

Clare, her father recalled, had been displaying peculiar symptoms since January 1996, notably complaining of an odd taste in her mouth and worsening depression. But her family doctor, and subsequently a number of specialists, reckoned the cause was mental rather than physical.

More than a year after the Government had publicly announced the existence of v-CJD, and government experts had written to psychologists and psychiatrists to ask them to look for particular groups of symptoms, one psychiatrist treating Clare insisted that her weight loss, crying, numbness, agitation and erratic balance



Clare Tomkins (above) with her boyfriend Andrew before she fell ill with v-CJD. She is now blind, and needs 24-hour care to prevent her drowning in her own saliva. Left: Roger Tomkins, who told the BSE inquiry yesterday of his daughter's demise

Main photograph: Mike Gunnill

were caused by psychiatric illness.

As the illness worsened in 1997, "her hands turned inward, her feet too. She became knock-kneed, and her hips disjoined, so she could not walk", Mr Tomkins said. "She would make more and more sudden head movements. Her eyesight deteriorated and she cried constantly. 'The worst thing,' he said slowly, 'was sometimes at night, when she would howl like a sick, in-

jured animal. She started to hallucinate. It is now clear to me that she was tormented in her condition."

In April 1997, Clare ceased to recognise her mother, Dawn, and a few weeks later declared that "Dad is dead". Yet by this stage other doctors not psychiatric specialists had diagnosed v-CJD. She was admitted to a private psychiatric clinic which prescribed "reward therapy" in which she

would be allowed treats such as watching television in return for raising her self-esteem by carrying out tasks such as washing herself.

"I couldn't see any reward that would be sufficient to motivate her," Mr Tomkins said. "But we were told that Clare had a psychiatric condition, in which she was torn between leaving home and staying with her family. The psychiatrist was absolutely

adamant this was the source of the trouble." He was told that the family must not visit her for two weeks as part of the therapy.

Eight days after leaving her, he was told by the clinic that they had stopped the therapy because they were concerned about her health. Mr Tomkins and his wife rushed to see their daughter. "We were horrified at what we saw. We found Clare in a physically and mentally exhausted state. Her skin was

'Sometimes at night she would howl like a sick, injured animal. She was tormented in her condition'

covered in carpet burns and her whole body in tiny cuts. We were told she had inflicted these upon herself when she got so scared she hid under the bed. My darling daughter in her state of fear and anxiety obviously cut herself on the bed's springs."

Clare was taken to the casualty unit of a nearby hospital, where Mr Tomkins insisted that the cuts should be catalogued. She was then admitted and cared for in an acute ward. "I haven't enough praise for the staff there," he said. Pointedly, he did not praise the private clinic's care.

Clare is now at home where her health authority provides constant care. "We are – I hesitate to use the word lucky – but fortunate that we have such a care package," said Mr Tomkins. "It is the very minimum that you need."

As he finished, one of the panel members asked him if he had any views why his younger daughter – and not any other member – had fallen ill, he replied: "I do ask myself that question every day. I look at people... and ask, why my daughter? It's such a minuscule risk but it's happened, and the results are terrible. It's not just like dying. She has lived in hell for 18 months."

Doctors are still unable to say how long Clare will survive. There is still no cure for v-CJD.

'Blairmania' abroad as France goes mad for Tony

By Kathy Marks

TONY BLAIR received a nostalgic reminder yesterday of the adulation that he encountered in the early months of his government: not from his own electors, however, but from a French television presenter renowned for her steely appearance and formidable interview technique.

So enthusiastic are our closest neighbours about Mr Blair – whom they regard as a dynamic and forward-thinking politician – that commentators across the Channel have christened the phenomenon "La Blairmania". Tonight, an entire 90-minute programme devoted to the Prime Minister will be screened on France 3, one of the main terrestrial channels.

Yesterday the entire production team of France Europe Express, a weekly current affairs series, decamped to London to pre-record the programme, the thesis of which is: "Is the England of Tony Blair a model for the Europe of Tomorrow?"

After showing film clips of selected moments in the prime ministerial career – Tony being cheered by crowds in Downing Street the day after his election victory, Tony sharing a drink with Lionel Jospin, his French counterpart, while on holiday in France last summer – Christine Ockrent, the grande dame of French television, asked, by way of introduction: "What is it that intrigues us about Tony Blair? Is it his youth? Is it his style? Is it his popularity?"

To help her answer these searching questions, she was joined in the studio by a select panel of guests including Joyce Quinn, the junior Home Office

minister; Lord Simon, the European competition minister; and Pierre Moscovici, the French minister for European affairs.

Nicole Notat, a union leader, declared Mr Blair "seductive". Jacques Seguela, a French spin-doctor, was even more effusive. "There is something of the Kevin Costner about him, or perhaps James Dean," he said. "He is a matinee idol."

Finally, the man lauded in France as one of the rare British prime ministers with a command of the French language arrived to be interviewed by Ms Ockrent and inquired, in impeccable French: "Can I perhaps speak in English?" As she looked up disappointed, he explained: "I don't think I'm altogether capable of tackling very complex subjects. When I talk to Prime Minister Jospin and President Chirac, I speak in English and they speak in French."

And so, for his grilling about the economy, the welfare state, foreign affairs and new Labour values, Mr Blair stuck doggedly to his native tongue. Despite this, he succeeded on several occasions in melting Ms Ockrent's glacial features into an expression resembling a smile. By the end of the interview, she was positively purring.

The Prime Minister's love affair with the French will continue when he addresses the National Assembly in Paris in a fortnight, the first British politician to be thus honoured. And what would he be telling French MPs, inquired Ms Ockrent. "I think we'd better wait until then," replied Mr Blair. "To be quite honest, my speech is still to be written." But he would address the Assembly in French, she persisted. "T'es père," he replied, flashing her a smile.

Mr Cute upstages the stars in his quest for perfect romance

IN THE NEWS MAJOR MINOR

FOR some newspapers yesterday the big news from the BAFTA awards nominations was not the fact that *The Full Monty* was up for a staggering eleven gongs, nor that Rowan Atkinson's *Bean: The Ultimate Disaster Movie* had been nominated for absolutely nothing at all.

No, the real story was that James Major, 23, son of the former Prime Minister, and Emma Noble, 24, a model and a hostess on the TV quiz show, *The Price Is Right*, chose the occasion to make public that they are now... an item, writes Tim Hulst.

So devastating was the revelation that *The Sun* cleared a story about payouts from the Princess Diana Memorial Fund from its front page in earlier editions to make way for "Major son is dating telly babe Emma". A grinning Mr Major was pictured at the Planet Hollywood restaurant clutching Ms Noble around the waist.

"James is the first real person I've met in ages, he's wonderful. He's incredibly romantic – and so cute," cooed Ms Noble. "I was smitten the first time we met – she's gorgeous," gushed Mr Major, before adding with a somewhat ungallant note of fatalism: "I really enjoy her company, but it's early days."

They were, it seems, first introduced two weeks ago by a mutual friend at London's Cafe Royal, where Mr Major recently began work as a manager. "It has been a nightmare keeping this secret," Mr Major observed, although he was not asked why he had chosen to keep it secret or why he had now chosen to go public.

Mr Major is, of course, no stranger to secret romance. Less than two years ago at a party to celebrate a new Andrew Lloyd Webber musical he was pictured dancing passionately with Elaine Jordache, a divorcee 12 years his senior. This was shortly after Mr Major had "gone public" on his relationship with Ms Jordache, his supervisor while he was a management trainee at Marks & Spencer in Cambridge.

During the divorce case, Mr Major was named as the third party by Ms Jordache's husband, Michael, who described him as "an arrogant little prat who thinks he can help himself to any woman he wants because he is the Prime Minister's son".



Front page fling: James Major and Emma Noble at the Bafta party

The couple moved in together, but the relationship ended last May.

Ms Noble is herself no stranger to publicity. Last year she asked her lawyer to draw up a contract forcing boyfriends to pledge not to kiss and tell. The condition was that she would not have sex with them until they had signed. Ms Noble says she has not asked Mr Major to sign it because

"I don't feel the need, I trust him completely."

Ms Noble is represented by Neil Reading, a thrusting young PR in the Max Clifford mould. Yesterday the jury was out on whether it was Cupid or Mr Reading who had played the most significant role in the thrilling new love story of James and Emma.

SO JUST WHAT DOES HE SEE IN HER?

Martin Knowler told the *News of the World* of a "frantic" session in the sand dunes at Camber Beach in East Sussex with a 16-year-old Emma. "She was an absolutely fantastic lover," Robbie New, told *The Sun*. "If there was such a thing as being a perfect ten sexually, she was it."

AND AN ADDED BONUS

In June, 1996, Emma spent £4,000 to have her breasts enlarged from 34B to 34C.

LIKE FATHER LIKE SON?

Like his son, John Major enjoyed a long-

term liaison with an older woman in his formative years, that is to say Jean Kierans. After five years he walked out and then met and married Norma. Could Emma Noble be the new Norma Major?

ROMANCE, MAJOR-STYLE

In 1995, he would take Jo Payne, a former girlfriend for romantic evenings at the Cock Inn and even showed her his terrapins. However, once he had taken her virginity, everything changed. "Afterwards he told me to get my clothes on and said, 'This never happened'," she said. "He just got up and walked out. James is a complete bastard and a womaniser."

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John Major

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overpayments, the balance on which interest is calculated is reduced at the end of each month. You can then access those funds any time you like by using a cheque book which is provided.

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مصرف الراجحي

Wealth fails
passport to

Magi

Fury at plans to close hospital



Rob Easton, a cancer patient, with his son Raef and wife Beverley. He says Raef would not be able to visit him if the Kent and Canterbury closes

Photograph: Rui Xavier

By Jeremy Laurence
and Rosa Prince

A BITTER war is being fought in rural Kent which has pitted patients and hospital consultants against health authority managers over proposals to close the Kent and Canterbury hospital, one of three serving the east of the county.

The dispute has become so vicious that one of the key players has received anonymous phone calls threatening his family. But it is mirrored in its content if not in its bit-

terness—in arguments in health authorities across the country, as shown in our list of hospitals where change is threatened. The total is certain to be an underestimate as similar discussions are being held in almost every health authority.

In Kent, pleas from Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, for collaboration in place of competition—the previous government's lever for change—have fallen on deaf ears. Local people are left frightened and confused.

Maureen Hoskins, 55, who

comes from Birchington near Margate every day for treatment for pelvic cancer, said she was furious at the proposed closure of the cancer unit at the Kent and Canterbury and its transfer to Maidstone, a 60 mile, hour-long drive away. "It's obvious," she said, "if they move the cancer unit to Maidstone, I will die. How will I get there? Who will bring me? This isn't pleasant treatment. You get diarrhoea, cystitis, you are sick."

Her husband, Bill, already takes half a day off every day to drive her the 26 miles to Can-

terbury and Kent and would not be able to take her to Maidstone. He said: "At the moment, we just about get home after the treatment. before Maureen's pain begins. She couldn't manage a longer drive."

East Kent Health Authority says that to provide safe, high quality medical care, resources must be concentrated in two of the three existing hospitals—the 500-bed William Harvey in Ashford, and the 460-bed Queen Elizabeth II in Maidstone. The third, which are in the major centres of population. A spokes-

woman said: "This is not about money, it is about safe working. It is about making better use of manpower and getting the best health care for people."

Local consultants in Canterbury insist that all three hospitals can be kept open, reneging—according to the health authority—on their earlier acceptance that one hospital must close.

Dr Jim Appleyard, consultant paediatrician at the Kent and Canterbury, said: "We are not whipping up anger we have just gone to local people and told

them what is planned. The fact that the cancer service is being moved makes them very angry."

Roh Easton, 39, stays at the Kent and Canterbury for five days every three weeks having chemotherapy for testicular and lung cancer. His wife Beverley, and 22-month-old son Raef, visit him every day. Mr Easton, who lives in Canterbury, says if the unit moves to Maidstone, it would be too far for his son to visit. He says: "I would miss the cuddles and his smile. I am a very hands-on parent. I would miss that so much."

Changing face of the health service

NORTH WEST REGION
Morecambe Bay: Five hospitals—Furness General, Queen Victoria, Royal Lancaster Infirmary, Ulverston and Westmorland General—in three acute trusts to merge into one. Morecambe Bay Hospitals NHS Trust, from April. Two community trusts to merge.
South Lancashire: Southport and Ormskirk hospitals. One to become acute hospital and the other a community hospital by Secretary of State. Agree which should be which. Awaiting decision by Secretary of State.
Manchester: Withington and Wythenshawe hospitals. Wythenshawe to be re-built as main acute hospital and Withington to be community hospital. Negotiations in progress under the Private Finance Initiative. Manchester Royal Infirmary to be re-built under PFI scheme with specialist children's unit. Royal Manchester Children's Hospital and Booth Hall Children's Hospital will then close. Approved by former health secretary Stephen Dorrell in March 1997.
Bury: Consultation to start on plans to close Bury General Hospital and centralise services on Fairfield General.
Rochdale: Some services at Bury Hill Hospital to move to Rochdale Infirmary.

NORTHERN AND YORKSHIRE
Newcastle: Freeman and Royal Victoria Infirmary to merge. Ministerial decision imminent.
Durham: Five trusts to merge into three from April. Darlington Memorial, Bishop Auckland, North and South Durham acute trusts to become two: North and South Durham Health Care Trust. A third trust, Durham County Primary Services, will cover mental health and learning disabilities throughout the county. Leeds: St James University Hospital and Leeds General Infirmary—major review of services.
Gateshead: Proposed merger of Queen Elizabeth Hospital and St Mary's Hospital, Middlesbrough, put on hold at request of health minister Alan Milburn. He asked the two trusts to look again at the options.
North Tyneside: Merger of North Tyneside Trust and two community trusts under discussion.

TRENT
Derby: Derbyshire Royal Infirmary and Derby City General to merge from April, with the City to become main acute site.
Lincolnshire: Service review with proposed closure of some community hospitals out to consultation. Also sharing of services among the eight trusts and the two main hospitals, the Boston Pilgrim and the Lincoln County.
Leicestershire: Review of services at Leicester Royal Infirmary, Leicester General and Glenfield hospitals.
South Humberside: Review of services at Scunthorpe and Grimsby hospitals going out to consultation.

WEST MIDLANDS
Birmingham: Selly Oak and Queen Elizabeth hospitals to close and be replaced by new building on University Hospitals site. Consultation on reconfiguring services among City Hospital, Royal Orthopaedic, Heartlands and University Hospitals ended this month (2 March).
Worcestershire: Proposed new hospital in Worcester as main acute centre, Kidderminster General Hospital to become out-patient and day surgery centre, Alconbury Hospital, Redditch to specialise in urology and orthopaedics. Consultation opened this month.
Rugby: Consultation on proposed merger of Rugby and Watlington NHS Trusts ended last month. Main acute hospital at Watlington will share surgeons with St Cross Hospital. Awaiting decision by Secretary of State.

ANGLIA AND OXFORD REGION
Oxford: Plans to close Radcliffe Infirmary in town centre and move work to John Radcliffe Hospital on outskirts under discussion.
Ipswich: Ipswich General Hospital and West Suffolk General Hospital. Bury St Edmunds to share services.

NORTH THAMES
Stamford: Lister Hospital in discussions on sharing services with Queen Elizabeth II Hospital at Welwyn Garden City.
Enfield: Chase Farm Hospital in discussion on sharing services with North Middlesex and New Barnet hospitals. Edgware to become a community hospital. Essex—three maternity hospitals, in Braintree, Harlow and Clacton, to close.
North London: New building to bring together University College Hospital, the Middlesex, Hospital for Tropical Diseases and the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. Services to be shifted between St George's and Addison Wesley hospital.
New Queen Elizabeth Hospital to be built under PFI scheme at Greenwich.
East London: One of Canterbury, Thanet and Ashford hospitals to close and work to be transferred to remaining two. Consultation ends on 8 May.
West Kent: Hospitals in Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells and Dartford to share services.
Surrey: East Surrey and Crawley hospitals to merge. Ashford and St Peter's hospitals to merge.

SOUTH THAMES
South London: Plans to switch services from Guy's to St Thomas's to be re-evaluated.
Acute services to be switched from Queen Mary's, Roehampton, to Kingston and St George's hospital. Queen Mary's to become community hospital.
Services to be shifted between St George's and Addison Wesley hospital.
New Queen Elizabeth Hospital to be built under PFI scheme at Greenwich.
East Kent: One of Canterbury, Thanet and Ashford hospitals to close and work to be transferred to remaining two. Consultation ends on 8 May.
West Kent: Hospitals in Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells and Dartford to share services.

SOUTH AND WEST
Bristol: Review of management at Frenchay and Southmead hospitals.
Coventry: Proposed closure of four of five community hospitals at Salop, Fosse, St Ives and Pottery and changes in number of beds in the remainder.
Review of management at Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust (Trilliske hospital) to be completed later this year.

Child abuse team told to balance truth against cash

By Roger Dobson

INSURERS warned child abuse investigators that a balance had to be struck between truth and financial interests, it has been revealed at the North Wales abuse tribunal.

They also demanded to see a report of an abuse inquiry team before publication, warned that insurance cover could be removed, insisted on vetting comments and statements, and at one point complained about files being released to the police.

And when independent investigators wanted to advertise their inquiry so that victims of abuse would know they were there, the insurers replied: "Such notices only encourage a bandwagon of claims to-

gether with adverse publicity."

A letter to John Jillings, who chaired the last inquiry into allegations of abuse and who had wanted to place the advertisement, said: "While I have a great deal of sympathy with the aims of your panel... a balance has to be struck between the need to seek the truth and the necessity for the county council and ourselves to protect financial interests."

The insurers also objected to the setting up of one inquiry, saying it was a dress rehearsal for compensation claims and adding: "We are concerned to avoid stirring up complaints particularly as two of the ring leaders have given up."

The insurers also warned Chwyd against implicating agencies: "As you know, your in-

surers are interested as insurers of other social service authorities, the North Wales Police, and other public bodies, and will not be pleased if there is an attempt merely to shift blame."

Gerard Elias QC, counsel for the tribunal, outlining the role of the insurers, said, "We submit that some of the insurers' directives, for that's what they appeared to be, went well beyond that which was proper for a commercial organisation seeking to advise one or its clients or protect its own financial interests."

The tribunal was told that the insurers were the Municipal Mutual, some of whose affairs were taken over by Zurich Municipal. John Goldring QC, counsel for the insurers, said, "They accept that in hindsight

... the tone of the correspondence was at times intemperate and went too far in the demands made of the council."

The tribunal is to investigate the financial affairs of a jailed paedophile who was paid £28m for looking after children and who claims he has no money to pay for legal representation at the hearings.

John Allen, who ran the Bryn Alyn Community, had claimed that he does not have sufficient funds to pay for legal representation at the tribunal, leaving the Welsh Office to pick up the bill.

But Allen, who once had an address in Harley Street and who was drawing an income of £200,000 a year, will now have his finances probed following the granting of an injunction.

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Hotelier takes on beef ban in court

A hotelier who allegedly served beef on the bone yesterday went to court to prove that the regulations banning the product were "absurd".

James Sutcliffe, 44, (right) is the first person in Britain to be prosecuted under the rules. More than 100 farmers turned out in support when he arrived at Selkirk Sheriff Court in the Scottish Borders.

The hearing was adjourned to next month.



Rape appeal

A TEENAGE rape victim last night waived her right to anonymity in an attempt to catch her attacker. Lisa Hunter, 17, who lives with her sister who is a serving member of the Army, was attacked at 4am on Saturday near Dregghon Barracks, Edinburgh. Her attacker was around 20, with a shaved head and bushy eyebrows. He spoke with a local accent, wore light trousers and a dark puffed jacket. Police appealed for witnesses, particularly the driver of a black taxi who dropped Ms Hunter at a Safeway car park. The Army issued a warning to women that this was the third assault in the area in six weeks.

Anger at South Bank

SIR BRIAN Corby is expected to announce today that he will be standing down as chairman of the South Bank Centre in London. Sir Brian is known to have been angered by the failure of the Arts Council and Secretary of State for Culture, Chris Smith, to approve lottery cash for a £131m development plan, with a glass roof covering the Royal Festival Hall, Hayward Gallery and other parts of the centre. Sir Brian said recently: "We are feeling very angry... Many board members have worked prodigiously hard and having cleared, as they thought, the last hurdle, they are fed up."

We were robbed, say footballers

Police were last night hunting thieves who escaped with watches, cash, credit cards and mobile phones from the changing room at Coventry City's training ground.

Detectives said personal items belonging to 10 first team players were taken from the Sky Blue Lodge at Ryton-on-Dunsmore.

A police spokesman said the "walk-in theft" happened between 11.30 and 11.40am today as the squad were training.

The thieves entered through an insecure rear door and stole property with an estimated value of at least £10,000.

Rail workers killed

An inquiry was under way yesterday after two workers were killed as they carried out maintenance on a railway line.

The men died instantly when they were struck by the 0824 Wales and West Services train from Portsmouth to Swansea at the Ebbw Junction near Newport. Inspector Peter Murphy of British Transport Police said: "A warning was given. All but two responded to the warning." The two men were from the South Wales area.

مركز الاموال

Revealed: secret of how to help smokers quit

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

THE BEST advertisements at getting smokers to give up the habit are those that depict the tobacco industry as deceitful and manipulative, according to a study.

Suggesting tobacco industry executives are dishonest and will go to any lengths to hook new smokers is the most effective way of persuading people to stop buying cigarettes.

The findings, published today in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, follow claims that British American Tobacco misrepresented the findings of a World Health Organisation study by suggesting it showed no increased risk of cancer from passive smoking.

Yesterday, Theresa Jowell, the public health minister, rounded on the industry and rejected its claim that passive smoking was safe. Speaking at a launch for tomorrow's No Smoking Day, Ms Jowell said: "BAT have a vested interest in keeping people smoking. They have to replace the 120,000

people a year who die from smoking with new customers. As the authors of the study made clear, it was grossly misrepresented by the tobacco industry who had their own particular spin to put on it."

Researchers at the University of California in San Francisco, who reviewed studies of the effectiveness of anti-smoking advertising, say the image of the tobacco industry in the public mind is key to the continued legitimacy of smoking.

They say: "The type and target of anti-tobacco advertising messages matter. Its strategy denormalises smoking and delegitimises the tobacco industry. By showing to what lengths the industry will go to recruit and keep new smokers, these advertisements have sparked interest in smoking and opened people's minds to other anti-tobacco messages."

An anti-smoking campaign run in California which denigrated the tobacco industry led to a 12.2 per cent drop in smoking in the 12 months from April 1990 to March 1991. The researchers say the campaign di-

rectly influenced 33,000 smokers who gave up and contributed to the decision to quit made by a further 173,000.

They say that advertisements which focus on health effects of smoking, or suggest it can lead to romantic rejection, have little impact.

The health service is doing too little to help people stop smoking, the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination at the University of York says.

The centre, set up with government funding to advise on best clinical practice, says doctors and other health professionals should systematically identify patients who smoke and urge them to stop.



Walking heads: Models Jane Spencer, right, and Larissa Ivanova bring a touch of colour to the streets of central London yesterday at a fashion shoot to raise funds for the NCH Action for Children charity. The hats are the creations of royal milliner Frederick Fox. Photograph: John Stillwell

Company drivers sleep at the wheel

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

COMPANY car drivers are frequently falling asleep at the wheel, according to a survey launched yesterday.

Almost a quarter have felt drowsy or have nodded off, while 18 per cent said stress "affected" their driving.

The survey by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (Rospa) also found that 17 per cent of those who drive for a living are concerned about the safety implications of the hours they spend on the road.

Despite the revelations, monitoring organisations gave the findings only a qualified welcome.

"We should get this into perspective. Company car drivers are no less safe than other motorists, they just drive longer," said an RAC spokesman.

However, many experts support the study. "People forget how stressful driving can be. After all if you work in a factory for long hours and become unsafe, your employer is required to take you off the job. But get into a car and nobody bothers," said Jim Horne, who runs the sleep laboratory at Loughborough University.

Rospa believes that people

Dicing with death

There is, roughly, one death per 15 million car trips in the UK. Here are seven activities that also lead, on average, to one death, in order of danger:

- Two million cigarettes smoked per death from lung cancer
- Three million acts of unprotected sex per death from Aids
- Four million bicycle rides per cyclist killed
- 10 million flights on a jet aircraft per passenger fatality
- 25 million beer bottles eaten per death from CJD
- 30 million walks in the rain per death by lightning
- 75 million trains boarded per train-crash death

driving as part of their job are likely to be linked with more than a quarter of Britain's 3,600 annual road fatalities.

"Accident rates among fleet vehicle users have been estimated to be 30-40 per cent higher than among private car users, but driver training can reduce accident rates by almost twice that amount," said Rospa occupational safety adviser Roger Bishings.

The findings come as Rospa publishes a Managing Occupational Road Risk guidance booklet.

DAILY POEM

From A to B and Back Again

By Michael Hofmann

The Northern Line had come out into the open, was leaving tracks like a curving cicatrice. There was Barnet, my glottal stop, trying hard to live up to its name, colloquial and harmless and trite.

The place was sunny and congested, brick and green trim, it had the one-of-everything-and-two-butchers of a provincial town. First, I dropped into the maternity hospital by accident...

The porter was an alphabetic, but together we found your name, down among the Os, and there you were, my brave love, in a loose hospital gown that covered nothing:

pale; on an empty drip; and eager to show me your scars, a couple of tidy crosses like grappling hooks, one in the metropolis, the other some distance away, in the unconcerned suburbs.

Our Daily Poems until Friday come from Penguin Modern Poets 13 (Penguin, £7.99), which will be the last volume in this influential series. It contains a selection from the work of Michael Hofmann, Michael Longley and Robin Robertson, chosen by the poets themselves.

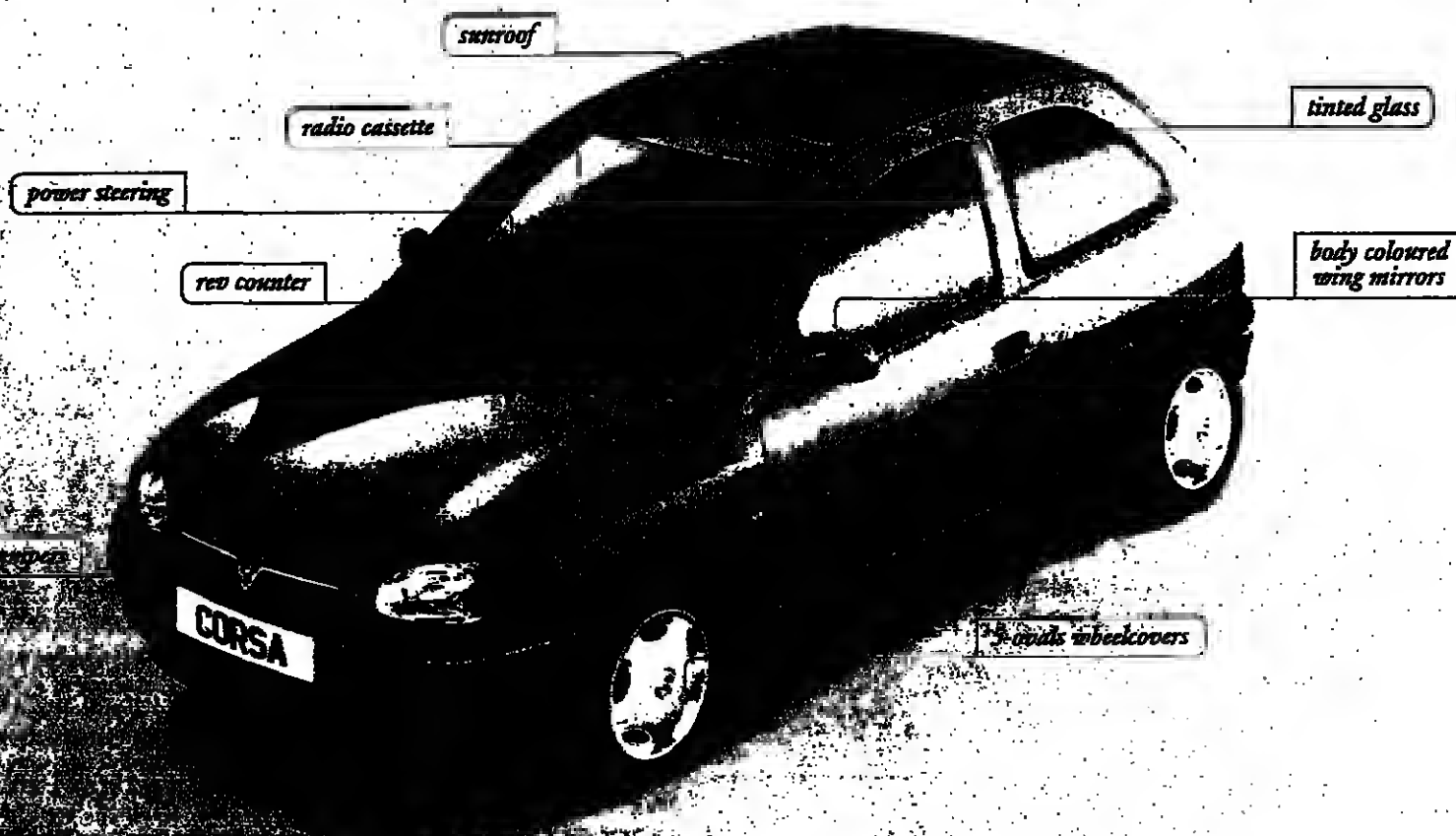
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Treasury not green enough, say MPs

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

WHEN it comes to caring about the environment and eco-friendly economic growth, Her Majesty's Treasury is all talk and next to no action, MPs from all parties declared yesterday.

A powerful new Commons committee produced a scathing report on the green credentials of Chancellor Gordon Brown's all-important department.

It also suggests that every household should have a VAT-free fuel allowance for basic heating and lighting. That would help the poor, but to stop richer people wasting energy, there would be a higher tax rate on electricity and gas above this annual allowance.

Tory MP John Horam, chairman of the environmental audit committee, said: "There's no reality to the Treasury's rhetoric. There's no evidence, either in the pre-budget report, or in what they said to this committee, that they have a strategy for sustainable development." The committee's Labour MPs were equally unimpressed. "You can't just play lip service to the environment," said Helel Brinton, the Labour MP for Peterborough.

The committee's first task after being created late last year was to examine Mr Brown's November pre-Budget consultation report. Its MPs wanted to know how the Chancellor would fulfil his aim of raising taxes on pollution and other environmentally harmful activities - "bads" - while cutting taxation on "goods", such as employment.

Unlike ordinary Commons select committees, which scrutinise particular departments, this one can summon ministers and officials from any department. This is because its job is to consider how actions and policies across the whole of government are impacting on

the environment over a time scale of decades.

But its first inquiry got off to a bad start when Dawn Primarolo, Treasury minister, turned down its request to give evidence, pleading the pre-Budget convention of silence.

It was only after pressure from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions that she agreed to appear, and when she did she gave very little away.

In its first report, the committee complains that it could find no underlying Treasury strategy for judging how its own policies, taxation changes and overall economic growth helped or harmed the environment. Yet no other arm of government had more impact on natural resources, waste and pollution.

At a press conference yesterday, Cynog Dafis, a Plaid Cymru MP and committee member, said: "Green taxes are not just an opportunity here and there to raise a bit of cash." He envisioned them being used to shift the economy into consuming less land, fossil fuels, water, minerals and other natural resources.

With just 10 short paragraphs devoted to the environment, the pre-budget report was a big disappointment to the MPs. They call on Mr Brown to set up a green tax commission to advise him on eco-taxation - something Ms Primarolo appeared to rule out. The committee recommends that with each passing year the Treasury should get a larger proportion of its revenues from taxing pollution and waste, and give regular reports on its progress.

The committee says the anomaly in which VAT is charged on homes being renovated or converted, but not on newly built property, must end. This would encourage urban regeneration and discourage greenfield development.

Diana's death boosts money for charities

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE death of Diana, Princess of Wales, sparked an increase in the amount of money given to charity, it emerged yesterday.

As trustees of the memorial fund moved to quell criticism of the way the first round of grants have been distributed, some charities said that her death had raised awareness of the importance of donating money.

Vicki Fulman, of the Charities Aid Foundation, said that although a few organisations had lost out as millions of pounds flooded into the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, many others had benefited.

"In the months after her death there was a massive increase in the amount of money given to charity," she said.

"It stimulated a lot of people who had not previously donated money and it was given to all kinds of charities."

Many organisations who were never associated with the Princess said they had benefited after her death.

Save the Children, whose patron is the Princess Royal, said they had received a large number of donations in memory of Diana.

Joanoc Bailey, a spokeswoman for the organisation, said: "There was a new kind of understanding of why it was important to give to charity and we were very gratified by that."

Olive Gearing, of Oxfam, said that in the months after Diana's death, many people had made spontaneous donations in her name.

"Our shop staff reported that a lot of money was given to us in recognition of the fact that we do the type of work that she supported," she said.

The trustees of the memorial fund said yesterday that it would become a vital source of charitable donations. They have been criticised for allocating £8m to eight causes while 95 other charities will share £5m.

But Vivienne Parry, one of the trustees, said: "There will be so many grant announcements that in the end people will take no notice, even though some of them will be for large sums of money," she said.

"The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund will become part and parcel of everyday life in Britain."

Most of the charities who will receive a share of the £5m, including Barnados and Help The Aged, said yesterday that it was an unexpected bonus.



Joanne Amies-Winter with her husband Stephen. She was found dead after taking an overdose of cocaine

Body-builder killed by cocaine overdose

BRITAIN'S strongest woman died after taking an overdose of cocaine, an inquest heard yesterday.

Joanne Amies-Winter, 23, was found dead by her husband Stephen, on 23 February on the living-room floor at a house in Newbury, Berkshire, where the couple had been staying with friends.

The West Berkshire Coroner, Charles Hoile, who recorded a verdict of accidental death at Newbury Coroner's Court, said: "The message is quite clear - hard drugs can and do kill."

The hearing was told that scientific tests had revealed that Mrs Amies-Winter had taken as much as two grams of cocaine - a fatal dose - in the hours before her death.

A post-mortem examination showed that the champion body-builder was a regular drug-taker. As well as the cocaine, a small trace of Prozac and larger quantities of

ephedrine, a stimulant, and Nubain, an analgesic, were also found in her body.

Born in Hereford, where she still lived, Mrs Amies-Winter became a triathlete at the age of 14 and went on to represent Britain in the European and world championships.

She also achieved acclaim as a body-builder in national and international competitions and was Britain's strongest woman.

Mr Amies-Winter, also a top European strongman, told the hearing that he had once seen his wife injecting cocaine.

He said: "Jo liked to try all manner of things and she could not really be advised not to until she had done it herself. That was one of her problems."

Mr Amies-Winter told the hearing that Mrs Amies-Winter, a residential care worker, had recently been taken to hospital suffering severe pain. She had also suffered from pleurisy and bronchitis.

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Albanians get ready for a war they dread

By Andrew Gumbel
in Pristina

THIS IS the moment the Albanians of Kosovo have been dreading. For years they have been told that war with the Serbs was just around the corner, and that they were going to be the next Croatia or Bosnia. Now, zero hour has arrived.

For the past week, as Serb paramilitary police forces have blasted their way into Albanian villages and killed dozens of men, women and children on the pretext of flushing out terrorists, the telephone to Kosovo's capital Pristina and other towns in the province have been jammed with calls from relatives abroad, not just expressing concern but offering money and, if necessary, fighting men.

Most of these conversations take place late at night, because the phone lines are too poor during the day. Nobody, it seems, minds being called at 3am - many are too anxious to sleep properly and are sitting up with relatives and friends drinking raki and trying to imagine what their lives will be like if they are caught up in a full-scale conflict.

"Several friends have called in the past few days saying, 'I'm ready. My bag is packed and sit-

ting in the hallway. I'll just wait for you to give me the signal and I'll be on my way to fight for Kosovo,'" said a 20-year-old sociology student who preferred not to be identified.

After the first killings, in the village of Likoshane, families all over Kosovo rushed to buy up staple foods, detergents, medical supplies and fuel. The panic-buying did not last long, but it generated endless conversations about the practicalities of war.

"I came home and saw this huge pile of soap, antiseptic cream, disinfectant and aspirin and I thought, 'Didn't anyone think of buying some anti-depressants?'" the student said. "My father got mad at my mother because she had bought packets and packets of macaroni and he said, 'How on earth are we going to cook macaroni if there is no electricity to boil the water?'"

We figured out the best method would be to soak the macaroni in cold water overnight and then we could eat it for breakfast."

Kosovo has been on a slow-burning fuse since at least as far back as 1987, when the current President of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, galvanised Serb nationalism by hailing the province as the cradle of the Serb nation and vowed to "give



Life in conflict: An Albanian man queuing to identify the bodies of relatives yesterday in Srbica, 25 miles west of Pristina. Photograph: Srdjan Ilic/AP

it back" to the Serbs who lived there in a minority of less than 10 per cent. Two years later, with Mr Milosevic installed as Serbian President, Kosovo lost its autonomy and the local Albanian leaders were replaced by Serbs in charge of a large, repressive police force.

"All my life I have been brought up to expect a war," the sociology student said. "We thought we would be the first ones, and we were really surprised when the fighting start-

ed in Croatia and Bosnia instead. People would go around talking in very specific terms: 'The war will start in September', or 'The war will start in six weeks'."

Some years ago, Serbs and Albanians went to school together and had little trouble forming friendships. But after more than seven years in which the Albanians have boycotted the Serbian state and set up their own parallel institutions, the word "Serb" has become

synonymous with "enemy". Nearly all adult Albanians can speak Serbian, but a new generation of Kosovo Albanian children who have never attended state school is now growing up resolutely monolingual. Since few Serbian families speak any Albanian, the two sides are literally losing the ability to speak to each other.

Young Albanians are forever under the watchful eye of the Serb thugs who lurk on street corners. Demonstrations are

broken up with force, and if the participants are not beaten with police batons they are often attacked on their way home. And yet, few outside the combat zone, in the rural Drenica region, west of Pristina, are taking the opportunity to flee abroad before a conflict erupts; if anything, the tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanians living in Western Europe and beyond are considering coming home to their families in their hour of need.

"I spent three years in Lon-

don and maybe it was a mistake to come back," said Bajram, 29, a musician and medical student. "But if I left again, who would look after my father and the rest of my family? Our family is our life."

By unfortunate coincidence, the sociology student had just received a visa to Paris when the fighting started. "My mother urged me to go and stay out of Kosovo. But how am I supposed to go to Paris when this is happening?"

Israelis kill 3 in West Bank

Israeli soldiers fired on an Arab-owned van at a West Bank roadblock, killing three Palestinian passengers and wounding four. An Israeli soldier was injured after what the army said was an attempt by the van to ram the roadblock. Palestinians said it veered off the road because of mechanical problems. Protests erupted in Hebron, where youths stoned Israeli soldiers. — AP, Tarkomish

Close call

India's President KR Narayanan took the first step towards appointing a prime minister when he met Atal Behari Vajpayee, leader of the Hindu Nationalist BJP. Recalling Mr Vajpayee's earlier stint in 1996, when he was brought down after 13 days, Mr Narayanan asked him to persuade him he will be able to form a stable government. If the Telugu Desam Party, which won 12 seats, abstains from taking sides in a confidence vote, Mr Vajpayee will survive with a majority of one. — Peter Paphom, New Delhi

Selling seal

Canada's seal hunters are launching a slick marketing campaign touting such products as seal pepperoni and cure-almost anything seal-oil pills. It's a new tactic for the sealers, who face a high-decibel trans-Atlantic protest campaign as the seal-hunting season moves into full swing over the next few weeks. Samples of seal sausage and seal pepperoni are being offered at food fairs across Canada. — AP, St John's, Newfoundland

Sex-case first

In reportedly the first workplace sexual harassment conviction in Greece, a court gave Dimitris Asimakopoulou, a supermarket boss, a suspended 10-month prison term for fondling a 23-year-old female employee. She was fired one week after beginning legal proceedings.

Grieving relatives refuse to allow the truth to be buried

SRBICA (AP) — The Kosovo Albanians filed past 49 bodies, some charred or badly burned, trying to identify relatives who perished in last week's police crackdown in southern Yugoslavia's restive province.

At least three corpses were of young children; more than a dozen were women. Some were missing limbs, apparently lost in explosions.

A few were charred beyond recognition. The Serbian police still kept watch. A troop carrier was parked 50 yards away, its gun pointed at the crowd of 50 mourners, mostly men. Police blocked main roads all around, forcing mourners to come on mountain paths, by foot or tractor, to the deserted town of Srbica, 25 miles west of Pristina, Kosovo's capital.

The ethnic Albanians refused to collect the bodies, insisting on autopsy by internationally appointed experts. They say the Serbs want to cover up atrocities by swiftly burying the dead.

The Serb sources deny it, saying the bodies are decomposing. On Tuesday, Serbian police threatened to bury the dead in a mass grave if the corpses are not collected. But it was

not clear if they would carry out that threat.

In Pristina, Robert Gelbard, the American envoy to the Balkans, arrived on the elusive quest for a diplomatic solution to the latest Balkan violence. Mr Gelbard met the leader of the main ethnic Albanian party, Ibrahim Rugova, who advocates a peaceful struggle for Kosovo's inde-

pendence from Serbia. Mr Gelbard on Monday met Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, who in a statement from his office insisted that Kosovo's problems could be solved only in Serbia.

Adem Demaci, a Kosovo Albanian leader who spent decades in Serbian jails, said the outside world's reaction to the events in Kosovo was

too weak to force Mr Milosevic into changing his stance. "Milosevic has declared war to Albanians," Mr Demaci said. "Albanian resistance will not cease."

Serbs have brushed aside foreign criticism, saying they were cracking down on a shadowy separatist armed force called the Kosovo Liberation Army.

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Voters' Europhobia threatens to topple Denmark's leader

By Imre Karacs

The economy is booming, unemployment has been nearly halved in the past five years, yet voters feeling insecure about their future in Europe are threatening to turf their wooden Prime Minister out of office.

Sounds familiar? Polls ahead of today's election in Denmark say Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen is heading for defeat. If he is ousted after a campaign in which the country's semi-detached status in the EU was an important issue, the cause of European integration may suffer a blow.

Mr Rasmussen persuaded Danes in 1993 to approve a watered-down version of the Maastricht Treaty, following the débacle of the first referendum. Now opt-outs won by Denmark, including the right to shun monetary union, are being undermined by his opponent, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, leader of the Liberal Party and the choice of a putative right-of-centre coalition, wants to opt back in. The polls predict a victory for his alliance.

Eurocrats should not rejoice yet, as the decision over the country's place in Europe rests with the electorate, who will return to the ballot box in two



Rasmussen: Successful, but looks set to be ousted

months to ratify Maastricht II: the Amsterdam Treaty. Instead of bringing Copenhagen closer to Brussels, as Mr Ellemann-Jensen hopes, May's referendum could wreck havoc in Europe once again. The Treaty must be ratified by all 15 member-states. Without a Danish "yes", it is back to the drawing board.

The irony of the situation is that there was no need to make Europe an issue in the election. Voters found Mr Rasmussen's mild Euro-scepticism reassuring, and were almost certain to sign for the new treaty. But in the event of his demise, fears about a European super-state may provoke a stampede into the rejectionist camp.

China's leaders put one of their own on trial for corruption

By Teresa Poole
in Peking

THE top echelon of the Chinese Communist Party has finally decided to put one of its own in the dock for corruption. The long-awaited trial of Chen Xitong, the disgraced former Peking party chief and Politburo member, will take place soon, it was announced yesterday.

The Supreme Court Procurator, General Zhang Siping, yesterday told the National People's Congress (NPC) that Mr Chen, 67, would be charged with embezzlement and dereliction of duty.

Mr Chen was sacked as Peking party secretary in April 1995 after Wang Baosen, a vice-mayor of Peking, shot himself rather than face corruption charges.

Subsequent reports said that 18.3 billion yuan (£1.3 billion) had been embezzled from Peking's funds during Mr Chen's tenure, implicating a ring of corrupt officials.

Mr Wang and Mr Chen were said to have had a string of villas and apartments for their relatives and mistresses. Mr Chen disappeared from view after April 1995, but was not thrown out of the party until last autumn.

This is a test case for whether the highest ranking officials must also clean up their act. During recent anti-crime crackdowns, lesser mortals were swiftly executed for financial crimes such as VAT receipt fraud. Mr Chen's son has already been sentenced to 12 years in jail for corruption.

Sadly, the trial is certain to be held behind closed doors, with only a sanitised version appearing in the official media.

Although his crimes are well above the necessary threshold, Chen is very unlikely to receive the death sentence. Any jail term would probably be served under house arrest.

Corruption is a way of life in China. Mr Zhang said Chinese prosecutors investigated 387,352 cases of corruption, bribery, embezzlement and dereliction of duty between 1993 and 1997. The cases prevented direct economic losses of 22.92 billion yuan (£1.7 billion), but only represent the tip of the iceberg.

Meanwhile, the deputies to the NPC yesterday gave overwhelming support to a plan to halve the number of central government civil servants, with 2,814 delegates voting for the measure, 12 against, and 33 abstaining.

Fugitive's brother cuts off hand in protest

By David Osborne
in New York

A MONTH-LONG manhunt in the mountains of western North Carolina for the suspect in the bombing of an Alabama abortion clinic has provoked an unusual protest from the fugitive's brother. He has seen off one of his hands.

The FBI confirmed yesterday that Daniel Rudolph maimed himself at his home in Charleston on Monday. He

videotaped himself amputating the hand with an electric circular saw and then sent the tape to the FBI.

The grisly act was being seen as an appeal to the FBI to end its search for the brother, Eric Rudolph, believed to be hiding deep in the mountains. A \$100,000 reward is on offer for information leading to his arrest.

Police have been hunting for Rudolph since charging him with the 29 January attack in

Birmingham, Alabama. One off-duty policeman was killed and a nurse was seriously injured in the blast at Birmingham's New Woman All Women Clinic. The device used in the attack was a home-made nail bomb hidden in a plant pot. The FBI has also been searching for evidence linking Rudolph, 31, to the Centennial Park explosion at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta.

An FBI spokesman in Charleston expressed regret

over the self-mutilation. Surgeons in Atlanta were struggling yesterday to re-attach Mr Rudolph's hand. Neighbours in Charleston described medical emergency personnel arriving at his home and searching on the ground for the missing limb.

FBI officials voiced hope that the fugitive would be captured by May at the latest.

In the meantime, the manhunt was extended into the popular Smoky Mountain National

مكتبة الامم المتحدة

Suharto safe as Indonesia edges towards collapse

By Richard Lloyd Parry
in Jakarta

EXACTLY 32 years ago this morning, Indonesia - like the Indonesia of 1998 - was in an alarming state. Like today, the economy was in turmoil and prices were rising. In Jakarta, the police and soldiers were on the streets, and thousands of students were demonstrating against the government.

After meeting his cabinet on 11 March 1966, the then President Sukarno could resist no longer: following veiled threats of a military coup, he handed over leadership to a young Javanese general named Suharto.

Thirty-two years later, Indonesia's generals, businessmen and civil servants have met to consider the future of their leadership once again. Their economy is close to collapse, and in Jakarta yesterday at least 10 people were arrested in one of dozens of protests held in cities throughout the country. But there is one big difference from the events of 30 years ago. Today, 11 March 1998, after his unanimous re-election yesterday by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Suharto will be sworn in for his seventh consecutive term as President of Indonesia.

It is a measure of his skill that, even with his economy collapsing, Suharto is still the only credible candidate for the leadership of the world's fourth biggest nation.

Part of the explanation is obvious. The MPR is a parody of a democratic body. Six hundred of its 1,000 members are appointed directly by the government, and 400 are members of a parliament, chosen in rigged

elections. Ten are members of the President's family. Suharto was the only candidate, and the MPR held no vote and no debate. At 10am yesterday, the assembly resounded with shouts of "I agree, I agree!". Thus was the matter settled for another five years.

"Suharto is the government, and he is as firmly in control now as he has ever been," a Western diplomat in Jakarta said. "Within the government he is all powerful - the machine operates at his command." When President Suharto disappeared from public view for a fortnight in December, according to



No change: Suharto is the government

diplomats, the government ceased to function.

"Insulting the president" is a serious crime, and the enforcement of this and other laws against "subversion" have prevented the development of any institutions from which alternatives to Suharto might emerge.

The media is under strong pressure to conform. The current affairs magazine *D&R* is being investigated by the police for defaming the President. Its crime was to put on its cover an image of Suharto as the King of

Spades. When an executive of *D&R* was asked why it had done this, he said: "No matter how many times we turn the cards, President Suharto will still be elected." The editor could face several years in prison.

The courts are seen as colluding with the government. And Islam, Indonesia's majority religion, is divided between several organisations which President Suharto has played off against one another. Even the two legal opposition parties are virtually run by the government. When Megawati Sukarnoputri, the only other person in the country with a personal following to match Suharto's, became too popular for the President's liking, she was thrown out of the leadership of the Indonesian Democratic Party at the government's behest.

Only the armed forces have the strength to offer a potential challenge. But Suharto's control over the appointments of senior officers is absolute.

At 76, Suharto has already had heart surgery and several unexplained periods of illness. There is the spectre of civil unrest, and the question of whether the army and police can stop sporadic riots over food prices from coalescing with the political protests organised by students and intellectuals. The army may be more divided than it appears. But in the absence of a popular uprising or a military coup, Suharto may see out his next five-year term, in spite of the growing poverty and instability of Indonesia.

"At the moment the riots and protests are isolated," one foreign observer in Jakarta said. "As for the military, why would they want to take over this mess?"



General disappointment: The former dictator Augusto Pinochet weeping yesterday in Santiago as he formally handed over control of Chile's army to General Ricardo Izurieta. Photograph: Reuters

Chile's old dictator weeps on leaving the army

SANTIAGO (AP) — General Augusto Pinochet stepped down yesterday as commander of Chile's army with tears in his eyes, ending a 65-year military career that turned him into one of Latin America's longest-lasting dictators.

"Fatherland of mine, I've been your soldier and that makes me happy," Pinochet said, his voice breaking with emotion during his farewell speech. He made no reference to the controversial post he was expected to take as senator for life.

The ceremony, in which General Ricardo Izurieta replaces Pinochet, began with some tension after President Eduardo Frei was booed by relatives of military men in the crowd. Some chanted "Pinochet, Pinochet". Pinochet, 82, was honoured by a parade at the Military Academy by 3,000 soldiers and 2,000 guests led by President Frei.

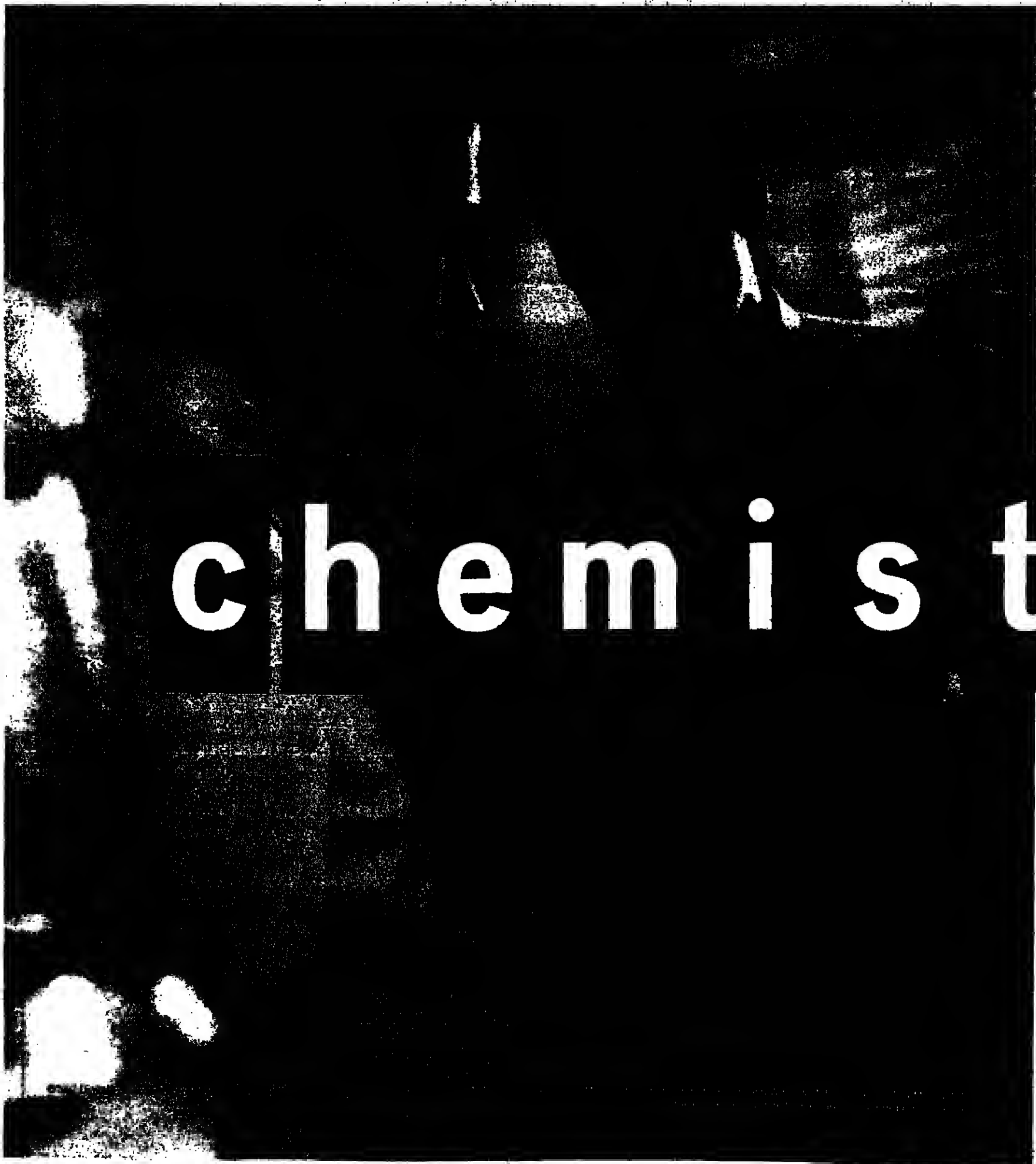
Although General Pinochet delivered a mostly military speech, he did refer to the bloody coup of 1973 in which he toppled President Salvador Allende. The military had been forced to act because the nation "was in the brink of self destruction," he said. But, he added, "I do not want to look back, because that anchors the country in the past".

When General Pinochet went to the presidential palace on Monday night for a formal farewell, police had to use water cannon to scatter a small group of demonstrators protesting at his senate plans.

The clash reflected the growing opposition to Pinochet assuming a senate seat, a position he receives as former president under the constitution he himself wrote. His constitution also made him commander of the military after he stepped down from the presidency in 1990.

Protests were expected to continue today, when General Pinochet is sworn in to Congress. Pinochet's critics say a man who shut down Congress and persecuted lawmakers has no place in the legislature.

Gen Pinochet's regime was accused of massive human-rights abuses, including more than 3,000 political killings, according to official figures. Some lawmakers planned to begin impeachment proceedings against Pinochet. But their effort appears doomed as the right-wing opposition, which holds a majority in the Senate, has made clear it will oppose it.



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The Bruce Lee of drama



Left, the French playwright Bernard-Marie Koltès. Right, Zubin Varla and Diana Kent in the RSC production of his 'language machine' play, 'Roberto Zucco'. Main photograph: Neil Libbert



Words were like weapons in the hands of Bernard-Marie Koltès. No wonder, says Jeffrey Wainwright, the French dramatist's latest translator, it's taken almost 10 years since his death from Aids for his work to be grappled in English

THE STREET is not particularly mean but this figure you've noticed ahead doesn't look like somebody you'd want to meet. You quicken, or slow, or veer, as imperceptibly as possible, to ensure your lines don't intersect. In this geometry is a tangle of anxieties: you will be asked for money, robbed, assaulted, raped, murdered, sold to, preached at, talked to. It happens.

This, the familiar fear of coincidence, is the simple starting-point for the French writer Bernard-Marie Koltès's remarkable play from 1987, *In the Solitude of the Cotton Fields*, which opens at the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow next week. Here the two characters do intersect, each claiming that the encounter is willed by the other's desire or design, and whether what occupies the next 90 minutes is, as its first director Patrice Chéreau said, a debate between 18th-century philosophes or the entry of the clown, the sense of incipient violence squats in the viscera

throughout. It's a verbal paveness that could at any moment become a knife fight.

Of course, if you were Bruce Lee - one of Koltès's heroes - the situation would be straightforwardly resolved: you could walk anywhere without breaking stride. Koltès once wrote a study of Lee's film *The Last Dragon*: one section is called "Le kung-fu et les mots", and it is easy to see how he understands words as weapons, and especially how he sees a parallel between the ritual formulations of highly structured rhetorical exchanges and the movements of martial art. It was this highly wrought verbal formality - so apparently incongruous in the garbage-strewn underpass world where the characters Koltès calls simply *The Dealer* and *The Client* meet - that first drew me to translate the work.

As Luis Pasqual, former director of the Théâtre d'Europe in Paris, has said, Koltès's language contains "an architecture of the emotions articulated in a

musical way". The long speeches which the characters exchange have the combative wit in which nothing is missed, no weakness unprobed, characteristic of Diderot's dialogues *Rameno's Nephew* and *Jacques the Fatalist*. They are intricate syntactical structures, ruthlessly acute in their logical progression, but, with the reiteration of key words and images, mechanically rhythmic. The piece is a duel cast as a deal, for Koltès's underlying implication is that a commercial transaction, with its potential for exploitation and fear of humiliation, is a contemporary paradigm for human relationships.

AS *The Dealer* and *The Client* fence guardedly around the undefined but eroticised matter of what is being offered and what is wanted, they do touch the usual expectancies of what might bond them - fraternity, mothers, childhood recollection - but none connect. "Try to reach out to me," says the

Client, "you won't touch me... There is no love, there is no love." All they seem to have in common is their absorption in the parables inscribed by each other's speeches.

Diderot and Bruce Lee: Bernard-Marie Koltès was obviously a writer of eclectic interests. He also translated *The Winner's Tale*, while Hamlet was a figure of recurrent interest for him. Now, nearly 10 years after his death from Aids in 1989, at the age of 41, the English-language theatre is starting to take a sustained interest in a playwright long regarded as a major force on the Continent.

Philip Frowse's Glasgow *Solitude* will next week join

Koltès's last play, *Roberto Zucco*, currently part of the RSC's Stratford rep (in an excellent staging by James Macdonald and a deeply thought translation by Martin Crimp), as the second major presentation of his work in this country, and there's more to come: a BBC radio production of *Solitude* next March;

What Koltès does not provide, though, is sociological realism. The anti-hero Roberto Zucco escapes from prison and goes on a brief spree of robbery and murder, including that of his mother. But what is so unsettling is that Zucco remains unpredictable and inscrutable. The Old Gentleman looks an inevitable victim but Zucco helps him with a sudden tenderness. Later, he snatches a child in cold blood. In the RSC production, Zubin Varla's blank, slightly bemused countenance cannot be read for motive or inner life. We see, says Macdonald, how society demonises and mythologises Zucco, how he plays a

role in our seemingly necessary anxiety about criminality, but also how, with our familiar "psychological sub-structure done away with", we don't have the illusory comfort of "understanding" him. The play gives us, says Crimp, "no point of rest".

MARTIN CRIMP calls *Roberto Zucco* "a language machine" - by which he means that the play is "propelled by the use of language which is not afraid to be excessive or lyrical". Macdonald adds that the characters "invent themselves through language". Their perception certainly applies to *Solitude*, where the characters are only defined by what they say in the real time of the play and the sardonic pleasure they take in its elaboration. Also, importantly, they are defined by what the one says about the other: in what sense, outside of their respective interpretations of each other, is one a "dealer" and the other a "client"? The Paris programme for Chéreau's marvellous 1995 production - his

third attempt at the piece - quoted Jean-Luc Godard's question and answer: "Where do you live? In language." and Diderot's *Jacques the Fatalist*: "How did they meet? By chance. Where have they come from? From wherever they were lost. Where are they going? Who ever knows where he is going?"

This is the metaphysical condition of Koltès's characters, but the moment an actor steps on stage, the character can no longer be abstract. One theatrical fascination of his work is the dizzying openness it presents to actors and director. The characters live in time too: a play must end. How Philip Frowse and his actors choose to realise this condition, and Koltès's enigmatic ending, I can scarcely wait to see.

In the Solitude of the Cotton Fields, 18 March-11 April, Citizens Theatre, Glasgow (0141-429 0022). *Roberto Zucco*, in rep, RSC The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon (01789 295623).

Trio's timely approach

Emphasising the universality of their plays is a priority for the team behind Suspect Culture, a young Glasgow theatre company. Brendan Wallace reports

AS THEY prepare to bring *Timeless*, their most ambitious show, to London, Graham Eatough (who directs) and David Greig (who provides most of the text) have reason to feel proud of themselves. In just five years they have transformed Suspect Culture from yet another student theatre group (who originally got together in Bristol) into one of the most innovative companies in Scotland. And with three major productions under their belt - *One Way Street* (after Walter Benjamin), *Airport* and now *Timeless* - they have not only impressed with their work, but have managed to build links with Europe (by

means of co-productions and workshops) that are unusual in the world of Scottish theatre.

Not that they're ashamed of their humble student origins. "People tell us that it's great that we've just had our third production," observes Eatough, "but I worked out the other day that it's actually our 12th."

Timeless is by far their biggest project, though. "Just the other day, I worked out how many people we employed," says David Smith, administrative producer and the third member of the Suspect Culture team, "and it was terrifying. I think, if we'd thought about it too much, we'd have been too afraid to do it."

It was only after a slow process of trial and error that Suspect Culture's distinctive approach evolved. Perhaps the most difficult early decision was choosing Glasgow as a base. Says Greig: "At first it was more a negative thing of not moving to London... But once we arrived, it was easier to work out our artistic agenda. We'd always developed things in rehearsal, for example, but when we moved here we realised that that was what we wanted to do. And we realised that we wanted to look at the physical side of theatre in a conscious way rather than simply letting the actors do what they wanted. And, thirdly, even though we were to be based in Scotland, we wanted to have a European angle to our work. That meant not just taking European influences into our theatre, but also creating work with the intention that it could and should tour abroad."

Timeless itself is an attempt to create a work with a certain amount of universality. On one level, it's the story of four friends who have become mired in nostalgia for their youth, yet, when reunited, fail to re-create it. But this touches on numerous other themes to do with ageing, memory and sexuality, all related to the problem of how twenty-somethings deal with facing the responsibility of age.

It's a theme that's cropped up in *Friends* and *This Life*, but what sets *Timeless* apart is its on-naturalistic approach and its integration of text with music (in this case, composed for a string quartet by Nick Powell).

"One of the initial ideas was just to use music in a way

that we hadn't done before," says Eatough. "Subsequent to that was the notion of trying to tell a simpler story than we had done in the past. Some of our earlier work had been very fragmentary, with actors playing lots of different roles and stuff like that. So, for this one, we made a conscious effort to give each performer one role, so that we could explore their characters in a bit more depth."

The next problem was to work out a chronological structure around which to orient the piece. *Timeless* takes three moments in the lives of the characters, and attempts to relate them back to an (almost) mythical picnic on the beach, which has become a symbol for their lost youth. As such, the "story" sounds mundane, but then, that was very much the point.

"We didn't want to make the characters significantly different from people like ourselves, or people who might be sitting in the audience," says Greig. "We wanted to find a strong level of depth and emotion in ordinary situations, and we were keen to create a level of intensity without having, say, a murder, or some great unusual event."

And, in Scotland at least, it seems to have worked. Eatough says he's been amazed by how much audiences have related to it: "When you've set yourself up as doing something vaguely new or different, questions of accessibility become really important. We don't want to be on the live art fringe, or to be seen as esoteric, so we're really pleased that audiences seem to have this emotional engagement with the work."



Suspect Culture: from left, Graham Eatough, David Smith, and David Greig. Photograph: Kevin Low

As befits Suspect Culture's European perspective, after its Looonoo run *Timeless* goes on tour abroad, and will be followed by collaborations with companies in Milan and the

Basque country. But, for now, Greig and Eatough are basking in the rapturous reception the show is receiving, and their arrival as a world-class theatre company.

"We are doing a different kind of theatre from anyone else in Scotland," says Eatough, summing up. "I don't know anyone else with the same artistic objectives. And I don't think

your average theatre audience will have seen anything like it."

Timeless: 17-21 March, Donmar Warehouse, Earlham St, London WC2 (0171-369 1732)

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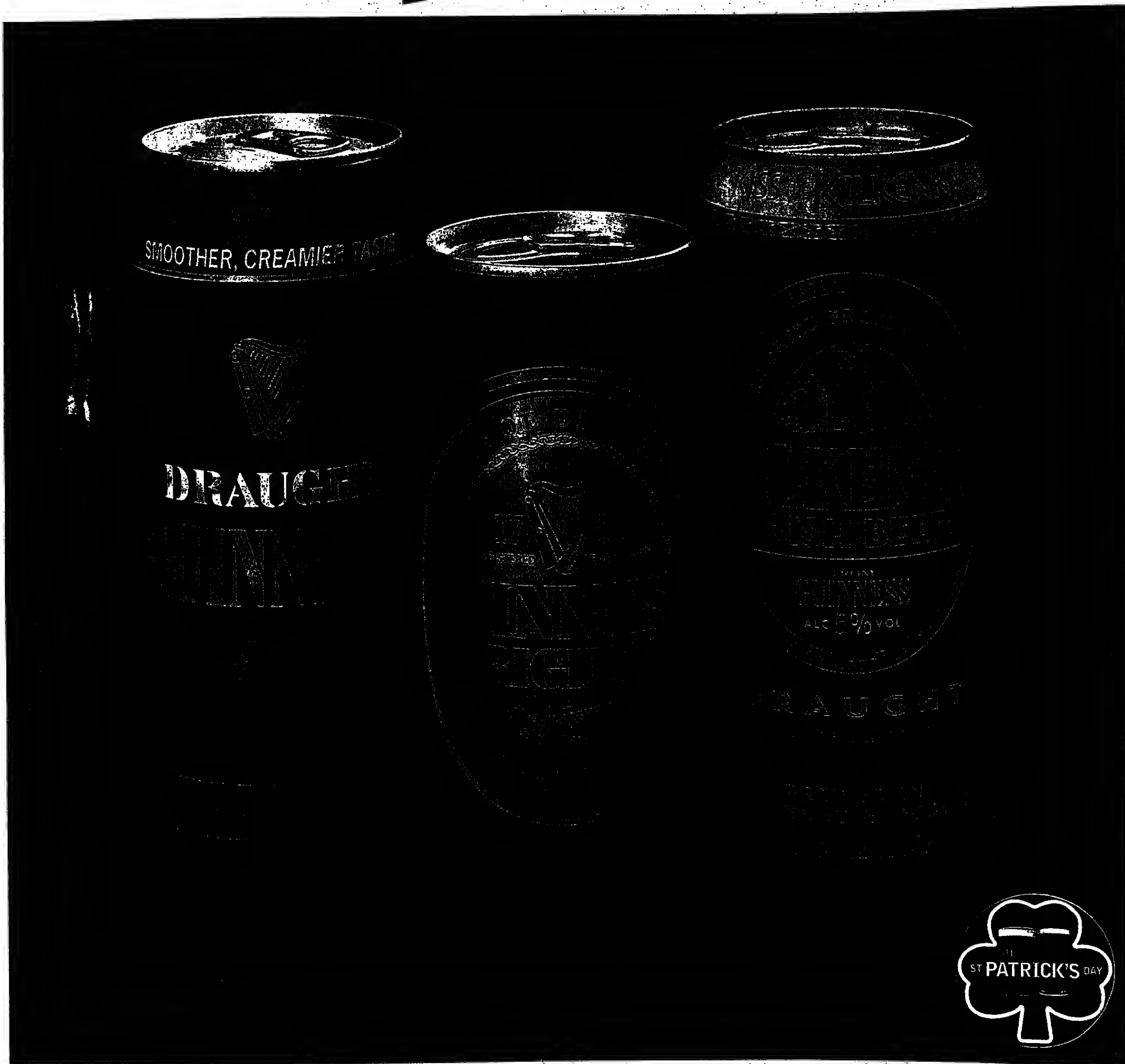
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Why the Così cast were adrift when they went to Marks

The Royal Opera House may be happy with costumes from M&S, but, says Melanie Rickey, Armani offers so much more

THREE female singers from the Royal Opera House went costume bunting in the Marble Arch branch of Marks & Spencer on Monday, after Giorgio Armani refused to alter clothes he had previously designed for a modern-dress production of *Così fan tutte*. Armani was paid £18,000 last summer, and £18,000 in 1995, to provide costumes for revivals of the opera, but was unhappy about making

further changes to the outfits, needed because some of the singers were smaller and lighter than their predecessors.

So the Royal Opera House team decided Britain's favourite quality clothes shop could provide clothes just as good, at a fraction of the price - £120 per suit, to be precise. And, what's more, they liked what they saw. After all, no one would be able to tell the difference except the singers wearing them, right?

Wrong.

This is where the Armani vs M&S debate falls flat on its face. Both companies provide simple suits for working women - and opera singers - but the similarities end. The essential difference between high fashion and M&S is not just the designer but the quality and weight of the fabric used.

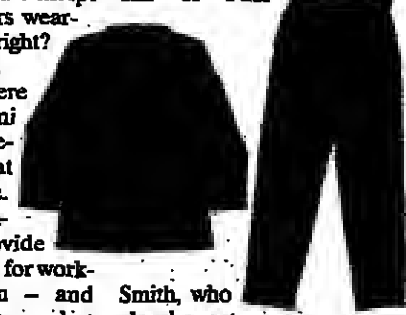
Left, the classic cut of Armani. Above, the M&S alternative.

the amount of time spent on manufacture, and the detailing, such as choice of buttons. And when you're under the stage lights, the cut and drape of top-quality clothing will be particularly apparent.

While M&S goes a long way towards offering the best for their customers, spending a little bit more will make all the difference; not just for opera fans, but for the rest of us as well. One fan of Paul

Smith, who also shops at M&S, explains it thus: "I tried on a £299 suit at M&S last week, which looked good, but didn't fit in all the right places. For £186 more I bought a Paul Smith suit that did fit, and will, I'm sure, last many years."

Perhaps all this palaver will teach the Royal Opera House a lesson: don't spend £18,000 on clothes that will only be worn once. M&S is far more reasonable.



LIBERTY EVENING

THE Independent is hosting a reader evening at Liberty on Wednesday 25 March, 6.30pm-8.30pm. The first 250 readers to apply for tickets will be talked through the collections for men and women by The Independent

stylist, Sophia Neophitou, and the fashion editor, Tamsin Blanchard. Expert advice will help solve your new season shopping problems and there will be a 15 per cent discount available on fashion purchases bought on the

night. Tickets are £5, including a free goody bag from NARS cosmetics, champagne and canapés. Send a cheque payable to Liberty Plc to Jo Childs, Liberty Press Office, Regent Street, London W1R 6AH.

OUT OF THE CLOSET

This week Holly Davies talks to Andrew Fiori and Ren Pearce, the duo behind the label, Pearce Fiori

Ren Pearce

"I BOUGHT two pieces of Galliano when I was a student from Joseph on Sloane Street for a super knock-down price. They were from one of his earliest collections just after he left college, when he was really avant garde. It was about the time when I just started my BA in Nottingham. One piece is this jumbo cord claret-coloured jacket with cords hanging on string from the front. It's completely mad. The other is this shirt which is really, really long; it comes down to my knees. Its made of this patchwork embroidery against in really bright colours. The cuffs are huge which gives the whole thing a weird silhouette. They're always the things that I notice once in a blue moon in my cupboard and it brings a smile to my face; I've had lots of good times in both of them!"



Fiori and Pearce: serious shoppers

Andrew Fiori
"I'M ABSOLUTELY not a hoarder, as soon as I realise I've made a big fashion mistake I throw it away. I'm trying to build a definitive wardrobe of the most essential 50 items. I buy loads of stuff from D Squared. They design for real men. It's quite sexy too. The trousers are low-cut and flat-fronted. I buy it all from a shop on South Molton Street. I'm a complete shopaholic, when-

ever I'm in town I can't help myself. I've got to the stage of my life when I should be allowed to buy whatever I want. I've admittedly got a fuchsia pink John Richmond shirt at the moment, it hasn't quite made it onto my back yet, and appears to be heading for the edge of my wardrobe rail where I'm sure it will find the floor pretty soon.

"I do keep some of my stuff in a suitcase under my bed, like a sailor shirt that Ren made me years ago. I'd never throw it away but I'd never wear it either."

"My fetish is to collect swimming trunks. I've just got a real thing for them. If I go on holiday I take a different pair for every day. Last year I splashed out on a pair of Gucci flip-flops which cut my feet to shreds. That's the last time I buy anything with big sparkly double G logos."

The Shoe. The Bra. The chase

What are this season's must-have accessories? Tamsin Blanchard joins the throng of black-clad fashion editors jostling for the best buys in Milan boutiques

KATE BETTS, the chic, sleek fashion news director from American Vogue, is heading for Gucci on Via Montenapoleone, the Bond Street of Milan. She has time for a half-hour shop between shows and knows exactly what she wants.

"There is only one shoe," she says, incredulous that I should be in any doubt that the rows of shelves holding Gucci sandals, loafers, and thongs are an irrelevance. The only shoe worth buying costs 295,000 lire (£98) and has a narrow, chiselled toe, a sling-back and a diamond G set into the back of the two-inch kitten heel. It comes in "buff" (fashion editor speak for beige), black, navy, deep burgundy and red. It also comes in not-mock-croc for 695,000 lire. And if you don't already possess a pair, you simply will not pass muster as a fashion victim. Oh, and if you wait until your return to London to buy them they'll cost nearly twice as much.

Twice a year, the world's most fashionable people - for whom it is a serious profession to know the shape of The Shoe or the precise length of The Skirt for both this season and next - assemble in Milan for Fashion Week.

In Italy, there is nothing frivolous about fashion. La Moda makes the nine o'clock news every night and commands entire pages in newspapers each day. Not surprising when you consider that Armani's empire is worth \$752.2m and Gucci's total sales for 1997 are estimated to be close to US\$1bn, with shoes accounting for \$128m of that figure for the first three-quarters of the year.

And when you walk the streets of Milan's platinum triangle, bounded by Via Montenapoleone, Via Sant'Andrea and the narrow, cobbled Via della Spiga, you see why. Women who are

interested in fashion, power and status will stop at nothing to buy the ultimate bag, (black patent leather shopper with thin handles from Prada) the must-have shoe (need I say Gucci?) or even the tie-to-die-for bra (Prada again).

You might think that shopping at Gucci or Prada is an intimidating experience. But not in Milan. There, the shops are usually chock full of fairly ordinary looking Japanese tourists working their way through shopping lists. And during Fashion Week they are also full of black-clad fashion editors, elbowing the tourists out of the way and working themselves into a frenzy with their 30 per cent press discounts.

Sally Courtis, British Elle's fashion editor, buys most of her clothes from second-hand vintage clothing shops or

swarming through the stores like a plague of locusts. At the beginning of the week, Gucci wisely stocked up on The Shoe. Towards the end of the week, stocks are beginning to wane and, by Saturday, it is sold out of all but small sizes; a bit like Sainsbury on a Sunday afternoon. The glittery G can be seen twinkling on the heels of fashion editors from the Vogues and Elles around the globe.

Francesca Fearon, a freelance journalist, throws caution to the wind and buys a pair, admitting: "It's because I'm a fashion victim. The kitten heel suits me. I love the shape of the pointed blunt-edged toe, the hint of the sparkly G on the heel. They are sexy looking... very sexy." Fearon buys hers in "buff" because she is visiting Gucci at

men's chunky flip-flops in black leather for 290,000 lire.

At Prada, the clothes are faring better than the shoes. Miuccia's perspex wedge heels are not seducing the women who would walk on a six-inch nail if it were fashionable. But some editors are taking note from the catwalks and investing in flat shoes - plain black leather moccasins or backless, spoon-shaped numbers.

The new underwear line is another matter. The company has opened up a chic little boutique on Via della Spiga especially for the collection of banana-yellow satin slips, baby pink satin and tulle bras, silk knitted knickers and raspberry coloured vests. A bra will set you back about 150,000 lire - but how can you resist when it is in pink, this spring's official colour? I can't. Nor can model of the moment Audrey Marney, caught shopping at Prada's younger line, Miu Miu. She can't resist two pairs of shoes - red patent ankle-strap high heels and flat sports sandals - a pair of navy trousers and a grey jumper.

But even the most die-hard shopping victim is defeated by a single item by Dolce & Gabbana that puts everything else into perspective: a pair of pop socks. As is always the way in fashion, these are no ordinary socks. We first saw them on the catwalk last October. They are black and embroidered heavily with golden wheat sheaves.

The shop assistant unlocks a cupboard and pulls out a rectangular box. Inside, the socks are wrapped in tissue paper, always a sign that you can't afford them. Delicately, she pulls them out, as though antiques from the V&A. How much? "One million, four hundred thousand lire," comes the reply. In any currency, that's a lot of money for a pair of socks. These are new stock. The first delivery of 10 pairs sold out within a week. That's almost £4,750 for 10 pairs of socks that do not come with an anti-sag guarantee.

If you had the choice which would you buy? The socks or a pair of Gucci kitten heels? Or how about a return ticket to New York (you could even pick up a pair of socks for free on the plane). Or would you simply opt for a lifetime's supply of socks from M&S? Ask any fashion die-hard and I could guarantee the answer every time. After all, you wouldn't have to choose between the black and the buff.



Above, from left, Independent senior stylist Sophia Neophitou wears sage-green ankle-strap shoes by Stephane Kellian for Martine Sitbon; Observer fashion editor Jo Adams in red velvet heels by Michel Perry; and Australian Vogue's Edwina McCann wears the shoe of the season, Gucci 'kitten heel' black slingbacks

Photographs: Kevin Foord

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The trouble with men: From childhood to fatherhood, the male of the species feels under attack

If life is not enough



JACK
O'SULLIVAN

IN THE picture on the right, Tony Dwyer looks happy. A glancing smile caught by an unexpected photograph suggests the kind, considerate person everyone remembers. The lank hair in need of a wash tells you he wasn't trendy; he went everywhere in that jacket and jeans. He did not try to impress with his appearance. And he was shy - in other posed pictures he hid his face with his hand. But this photograph shows good old Tony who always wiped his feet when visiting friends' houses, the young man who would gladly mow your lawn, someone whose sensitivity to suffering stopped him eating meat from the age of 12. There is no hint in this image of what drives a young man of 18 to walk off the top of a multi-storey car park one morning and end his life.

Indeed, even those who knew him best still cannot make sense of his suicide last August. They have studied his final day in minute detail. They know that, the night before, Tony had visited the local supermarket as usual with his dad to buy Pop Tarts (he ate them as usual for breakfast on the morning of his death). And of course, he picked up Yorkshire puddings that he would have eaten as usual the following Sunday, putting roast potatoes in the middle, but eschewing the customary beef. Six minutes before he died, we know he drew £30 from a cash machine, money which was never recovered. His family assume he gave it to a beggar.

When the police asked his mother, Diana, to identify his body, she laughed, out of shock. It couldn't possibly be Tony. Someone must have stolen his ID, she said. And even when she knew it was him, she was convinced that someone must have pushed him. But the police told her that the event had been recorded on the video in the car park, in Nottingham. At 10.24am on Tuesday 5 August, Tony Dwyer walked off the roof. Walked. He did not jump. The precise time of his suicide is recorded on his funeral order of service. But no reason is given. He left no note.

There are many cases like this every year, as hundreds of young people kill themselves: In 1995 632 young men and 151 young women under 25 died by their own hands. Only last week, Daniel Kirwan, 16, was found hanging from a tree at his home in Cheshire. Recently,



Last look: A final photograph of Tony and, left, his mother Diana and sister, Jo
Photograph: left, Rui Xavier

Richard Todd, the actor, has written movingly about how his son Seamus, 20, shot himself after a two-year depressive illness. The statistics for young men are particularly worrying - suicide attempts among this group have doubled in the past decade. Although far more women than men make suicide attempts, those by men are much more likely to prove fatal. The epidemic has prompted the crea-

tion of Papyrus, a support group for parents whose sons have killed themselves. They have conducted research among members, in an attempt to identify common themes and enable other parents to spot the danger signs before it is too late.

Jean Kerr, a founder whose 17-year-old son, Edward, took his life in 1989, has questioned 79 sets of parents. She

is convinced that depressive illness in young people, sparked off by the stresses of adolescence, is at the heart of the problem. She has found that signs of illness that can be recognised with hindsight were missed at the time.

Many of those who have died, she says, were very loving people, just like Tony Dwyer. The type who never complain. Suicide notes, she says, speak of "how the individual feels that the family will be better off without them... These are deeply caring and sensitive people who, even in their extreme depression are often trying to lessen the pain of others. A suicide note is, I believe, often the final act of love."

The irony is that these caring people leave their families devastated. "What hurts me most," Diana Dwyer says, "is that Tony cannot have realised what he was doing to us, because there was no way he would have done it if he had known."

So why did Tony Dwyer kill himself? You can speculate, as his family has done endlessly. Was the break-up of his parents' marriage the previous year a factor? Tony stayed with his father, while his mother moved nearby with his brother and sister? Perhaps, although no one can remember him talking about it. Maybe, like many suicide victims, he was fretting about exam results. He needed three Cs at A-level to win a place to study chemistry at Leicester University. Ten days after his death his family learned his results: he had only just made the grade.

Joe, his 16-year-old brother, wonders whether the future became overwhelming as Tony stood at the brink of adulthood. "Maybe," he says, "he was just scared and did not see the point of going on. Maybe he thought it was too much hassle. Maybe, he had been thinking about it for so long, it all piled on top of him and he just couldn't carry on."

But this is all "maybe", because no one knows for sure. James Spicer, Tony's only close non-family friend, had seen him several times a week for six years. "I used to say, 'Are you OK, Tony?' and he always said he was fine. He never said how he felt. He was polite, well-mannered, no one hated him. But he bottled everything up and it seems that's how it came out in the end."

Emotional withdrawal also bothers his mother. "If Tony had been feeling bad," she says, "I don't think he would have known what to do or where to go for help. I don't think teenagers would think of going, say, to Childline. They think of themselves as more adult."

She is convinced that his suicide was the result of a momentary decision. It could have been avoided if Tony had known how to share his feelings. "I still can't see him sitting down eating Pop Tarts that morning saying to himself, 'I'm going to commit suicide today'. I just can't see it at all."

Papyrus can be contacted at: 01706 214449. Parentline, which also offers advice is on 01702 559900.

Being middle class makes boys a target

THE Bash Street Kids have always given Lord Snooty and his school chums a hard time. But today there is a disturbing edge of violence to the taunting which goes on outside the school gates, where a smart blazer acts as a red rag. Middle-class pupils at posh (ish) schools are becoming victims of dangerous schoolboy battles which are not so much about race but class.

The problems of school rivalries were highlighted last week with the attack on 14-year-old Euan Blair, son of the Prime Minister. The surprising thing about it was that it hadn't happened before - not because he is the son of Tony Blair, but because he is just the sort of lad who gets picked on - a boy in a uniform, attending what is perceived to be a toffs' school - in his case the grant-maintained Roman Catholic Oratory in Fulham, south-west London.

Most boys of 13 have experienced at least one incident which dents their confidence - whether it is a kicking from rival schoolboys or a mugging at knife-point. Young teenagers are easy prey for older boys because they have not yet had their rough edges rubbed off, particularly if they are at a selective or independent school.

The scale of the problem is difficult to assess because so many incidents go unreported, even to parents. But according to Michele Elliott, director of the children's charity Kidscape, the problem of violent school rivalry is getting worse. "It's a burning issue," she says. For some the experience is so distressing that they refuse to attend school.

A straw poll she conducted recently highlighted how common the problem is. When she talked to a class of 22 13-year-old boys in a middle-class north London school recently, 20 said they had experienced some form of attack, yet only one had told his parents. It is not hard to see why: teenagers do not want to relinquish the precious new freedoms their parents have just begun to grant.

When children do report the incidents to their parents, they can be almost blasé in their response. As one mother with three teenage sons at an independent school

in West London puts it: "All teenage boys get mugged. It's a fact of life - they just have to learn to deal with it."

Michael Solomon Williams, 15, has endured three frightening incidents - an attack by a gang of five on the Tube going home to north London and two of demands for money. "We just did what they said: we put our arms up and they searched us," he says. "It wasn't nice but it wasn't too bad. The Tube attack was difficult to forget because it was on the route we take every day."

Michael has received little advice on such situations from his school. And while many schools invite police liaison officers in, their main concern seems to be drugs.

Another boy, Nathan Keiller, has endured three recent attacks, the last a week before the incident involving Euan Blair. Nathan who, like Euan, is 14, was mugged while shopping in Oxford Street with a friend. Later the police said half-term breaks always offered rich pickings for thieves. Such experiences encourage teenagers to carry their money in their socks and hide their watches at an alarmingly early age. But there is not much they can do to disguise their unbroken voices

All teenage boys get mugged - it's a fact of life. They just have to deal with it

and their middle-class air. What makes the situation often worse is the public's refusal to help or even to acknowledge the problem.

When two older teenagers approached Nathan and his friend from behind, one threw his arms round him, said he had a knife and demanded Nathan's plastic carrier. Because they didn't fancy the contents they took the receipt to get the money back. Meanwhile Nathan's friend ran to get help but the person he stopped did not want to know.

Like most parents in his situation, Nathan's father

Michael is puzzled. "The first time Nathan had money stolen in the street he was really upset because it seemed so dangerous and frightening," he says. "What upset him this time is that he didn't have the nous to avoid it. He just felt so humiliated and disappointed with himself."

"It's hard for us as parents, because with most things you can say when it happened to me I did this or that. But I haven't any experience of this. You keep thinking, maybe we shouldn't be letting him do these things at his age. Instead we have long conversations about how we can avoid it happening again. My view is that these things are going to happen but it's very unlikely that he's going to get badly hurt. But that doesn't make it any less frightening for him."

Police say they do go into schools to talk about personal safety as much as crime and drugs. But Michelle Elliott of Kidscape believes that schools could do much more to prevent incidents and prepare their pupils. After fights at her 16-year-old son's school involving gangs from a rival comprehensive the parents organised their own patrol. "A few parents standing on the street corner with cameras is worth a thousand policemen - these kids don't want their photographs taken."

For parents, the situation is a particularly difficult one, as they try to balance the need to encourage some independence in their children with the need to protect them. Some offer their children lifts and mobile phones and self-defence courses. Others like Michael Solomon-Williams' mother Juliet, believe that experience - getting out and about - is the best protection. She is relieved that her son now carries a personal alarm but would feel better if she thought anyone would respond if he set it off. When she recently stood by a teenager who was being attacked on a bus the boy was amazed. "Nobody had ever helped him before," she says. "I was upset that he was so surprised - it should be the norm that people stop and help, otherwise teenage boys will see themselves as on their own."

Celia Dodd

Wanted: justice for fathers whose bond has been broken

"I WAS naive enough to think that my name on the birth certificate meant something," Phil says bitterly. "But really it means nothing at all."

Phil has been to court more than 20 times in the past couple of years to try to get access to his son. He split up with the child's mother soon after the birth and has been trying ever since to play an active role in his child's life. "I've worked hard to try and establish a bond between us. I think it's important that a child has two parents and I'm determined to play my part."

Stephen has also struggled over the last few years to see the twins whose birth he witnessed. He has not seen them at all for a year and a half because the mother has allowed them to be adopted. As an unmarried father without parental responsibility he could not stop her.

What Phil and Stephen and countless other unmarried fathers do not realise is that as the law stands they have very little right to any say in their children's upbringing if they split from the mother.

"The mother can take the children abroad, change their names, change their schools and the father does not need to be consulted," says Jim Parton, chairman of Families Need Fathers. But now Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, is considering whether unmarried fathers who sign their names on the birth certificate should be offered parental rights. Such a proposal would give a father the right to see a child regularly even if



The threatened tie: Many fathers lose contact

he left soon after the registration of the birth.

At the moment a name on the birth certificate is not enough; what such a father needs is "parental responsibility" - a concept introduced by the Children Act 1989 which it defines as "all the rights, duties, powers and responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property".

Mothers automatically have parental responsibility, as do married fathers. The Act also

ensured that unmarried fathers could acquire parental responsibility through the courts - it did not automatically confer parental responsibility on them because of a need to protect vulnerable, unmarried mothers, especially those whose children had been born as a result of violent or coercive relationships. If Lord Irvine's proposals become law, a father would not need to go through this process in order to have these rights.

Many unmarried fathers are unaware that at the moment

parental responsibility is something that is not conferred automatically. In 1996 649,485 births were registered in England and Wales, of which more than a third were outside marriage. In more than three quarters of these cases the father's details were included on the birth certificate.

But in the same year, 1996, the courts made only 5,587 parental responsibility orders, and only around 3,000 parental responsibility agreements are registered each year.

While the possession of parental responsibility probably has little effect on a father's role day to day while the parents are living together or co-operating in their arrangements for the children, should the relationship break down there can be serious problems.

"I was supporting my child financially but I didn't have any rights," Phil says. "I had been there at the birth, but the mother didn't want to live with me and I was being put in an unbearable situation."

He discovered the concept of parental responsibility late. "So I went to the court - I represented myself - and asked for it. Legal aid is very hard to come by. The judge delayed it for a year saying he wanted to see more commitment from me. But how can you show commitment when the mother is hostile to you and won't let you see the child?"

"I've been back to the courts 23 times at the taxpayer's expense, waiting for a judge to

make orders - and then the mother breaks them."

Stephen had also been present at the birth of his twins. The mother, he says, had been unsure of her ability to cope before then and had mentioned having the two of them adopted. "She said she couldn't cope. She told me that before the birth but I overthought she would actually take the legal option. It seemed like she was trying to exclude me from their lives. But I don't want to be an absent father. I wanted to have children with her and we did have a close relationship. I wasn't consulted on anything, even the adoption. The parents are a young couple who feel I shouldn't have any contact."

Jim Parton of Families Need Fathers said that such experiences were common. "We welcome the changes the Lord Chancellor is considering; they are long overdue. We see people having real problems establishing parental responsibility - a huge waste of money on the litigation side and a huge waste of emotional energy. Most unmarried fathers have no idea of the situation."

"I used to be quite outgoing but now I feel like an empty shell," Stephen says. "And it's not just me that's been harmed. My mother is now restricted from seeing her grandchildren. I am a survivor I think at the end but it's been very damaging."

Names have been changed
Glenda Cooper

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مكتبة الامم

THE INDEPENDENT

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Who is to blame for water scandal?

YET ANOTHER privatisation chicken flies home to roost on Labour's roof. Last week the way the Tories sold off British Rail landed on John Prescott's desk. This week we are told his Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions is liable for a huge pensions bill for the state-owned water industry – because, surprise, surprise, most of the choice of the assets that were meant to pay for water employees' pensions ended up after privatisation in the coffers of the water firms.

The story is complicated, but it matters a great deal, not just to current pensioners, but potentially to hundreds of thousands of other state employees and to the taxpayers who may have to do the bailing out. Talk by ministers about tight belts and spending limits ceases to convince if – albeit unknowingly – they are presiding over massive profligacy. This imbroglio is not of Labour's making, but it is in the Government's interest to show that it is tidying up the mess. A few executions, figuratively speaking, would help.

This is a tale of divvying-up public sector assets in anyone's interest but the public's. When water was privatised in 1989 employees had the choice of moving to new employers' pensions or staying with existing arrangements. Those who stayed had their pensions guaranteed, they thought, from a fund into which various assets were put. But this "closed" fund got short shrift. Some of its assets were duds, such as a stake in a company that later went bust. This fund is now in huge – £400m plus – deficit, with a great and growing gap between what it can pay out and the obligations it has to pensioners now and to come. Guess who makes up the shortfall – taxpayers.

The story is told in a report today from the National Audit Office. This is the 800-strong team of accountants and specialists charged with ensuring public money is properly spent. It answers to the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir John Bourn, who in turn answers to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee. This is the ultimate mechanism to detect and remedy spending abuse. Taxpayers have nowhere else to turn. Yet this report instils a disquieting sense of how little we, or anyone, knows about the vast archipelago of state bodies spending public money. Here the NAO tells only half a story. The recent history of pensions for the water industry is a catalogue of mistakes, perhaps even recklessness with public money. NAO auditors have evidently followed the paper trail. But where are their conclusions? Where, most important, is their bill of indictment?

The public has suffered a huge loss. Who is responsible? Where do we look – to pensions advisers, trustees, fund managers, or to civil servants or Secretaries of State for the Environment? Does Sir John Bourn not know who is answerable – he surely cannot fear naming names, since his reports enjoy parliamentary privilege?

In another corner of the public empire there is the Audit Commission, which oversees council and health service accounts. The district auditors it supervises do name names; they sometimes even surcharge them and disqualify them from public office. Why is there such a disparity between local and national levels in the business of detection and punishment?

With this report Sir John Bourn has let it be known he is anxious about the custodianship of other public-sector pension funds, their assets totalling some £100bn. (If he really wanted to scare us he would also mention the pay-as-you-go pension arrangements for local authority staff which are seriously out of kilter.) But warnings only go so far. The Public Accounts Committee has the power to identify individuals responsible for this farago. If they cannot be hauled before a court then they at least can be publicly named and shamed. The Government believes in that procedure for miscreant youth. Let us see it, not before time, applied to people who instead of serving the public have by their incompetence or negligence cost the public huge sums of its money.

Negative ads can work



KNOCKING COPY works. Forget comedy, romance or the sell based on science: people, it seems, are persuaded by nothing as much as hard-hitting criticism. According to a study in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* adverts directed against the tobacco companies and their political cronies turned out to be more effective in stopping people smoking than factual messages trying to persuade them of the health risks.

The key words were "deceitful and manipulative". If cigarette companies were made out to be dishonest and unscrupulous, they were "delegitimised" and people started to ask themselves hard questions about their own behaviour. Becoming aware of what lies behind the tobacco industry's own advertising, smokers measurably changed their ways. It is not an isolated finding. There is European evidence that on controversial issues such as the use of fur by the fashion trade it is the blood-on-the-pelt approach that works best. How many other institutions are there that might be targeted in this way as deceitful and manipulative... pharmaceuticals, finance houses, certain food producers?

Yet knocking copy has its limits. People in this country say they dislike negative campaigning by political parties, though there is also evidence of its effectiveness. Consumers have an abiding sense of fairness. Shill-voiced campaigns can be counter-productive, if they make people start to feel an industry or product is being victimised. But that is not something the public are ever likely to feel about tobacco.



MILES KINGSTON

TODAY I am privileged to bring you an extract from an explosive BBC fly-on-the-wall documentary called *The Beeb*, which goes into the very heart of the BBC and shows the hilarious yet tragic things going on at the top. The programme was made inside the bunker of John Birt, the current Director General of the BBC, with his full knowledge. Here we go...

Birt: We have recently come under a lot of criticism for faking documentaries. Does anyone have anything to say to that?

Man with Glasses: Is this the thing about the Learner Driver?

Birt: Yes.

Man with Glasses: Oh, that. I can explain that.

Birt: Go ahead. Explain.

Man with Glasses: We found it would be cheaper to recreate certain scenes, sir, rather than film them at source. We got

the subject to tell us what had happened, and then we restaged it and filmed it in a faked version. But it was cheaper, sir. That's what you've always said. Make it cheap.

Birt: I haven't said anything of the sort. What I have always said is, let's have a learner, more efficient, more cost-conscious Corporation!

Second Man with Glasses: Same thing, John. It's just that you clothe it in business PR language. Half the time we don't know what you're talking about.

Man Without Glasses: (very softly) And the rest of the time we don't care.

Birt: What was that, Will?

Man Without Glasses: Nothing, sir. I was just wondering if there was a glass of water...

Birt: Should have brought your own. BBC isn't made of money, you know. Where were we?

Man with Glasses: Cheating in these fly-on-the-wall documentaries, sir...

Birt: Right. Has anyone got anything to say on these?

Man with Itch in Right Ear Which He Keeps Scratching: Yes, sir. Well, it strikes me that it's a load of hoo-ha about whether fly-on-the-wall documentaries are recreated or not. Take an example. When we have finished this meeting, a summary of the minutes will go out as a record of it. It will be, if you like, a recreation of this meeting. It will be dreadfully inaccurate. It will be weighted to reflect John Birt's views. It will discard all the argument and feeling. But it will come to be accepted as authentic, even by those who were there, even though it's deeply flawed.

Man with Glasses: That's brilliant.

Man with Itch: Similarly, a lot of TV is faked. The news itself is a rather rapid re-

construction of the real thing. A wide-screen film showing on the small screen is a rapid recreation of the cinema experience. I should think a lot of *You've Been Framed* is faked, even though it's on film. A lot of those stunts must be staged by amateurs just to get Beadle's shilling. Indeed, there was a case the other day of two drunk young men who tried to stage a video clip for Beadle when there was an almighty storm hitting the sea wall of their seaside town. One took the camcorder while the other walked along the sea wall. He was taken by a huge wave and drowned, while his mate was filming the whole thing. This was an attempted stunt which went wrong – and became real!

Birt: What are you trying to say?

Man with Itch: I'm trying to say that in fact the recreated, the faked, the rehearsed, the reconstruction all make BETTER television than the real and ac-

tual. Television is all the worse when it is not recreated. *Father Ted* tells you more about the Church and Ireland than a live relayed mass from Dublin would. On TV, the real is less genuine than the fake!

Man with Glasses: God, that's terrific stuff!

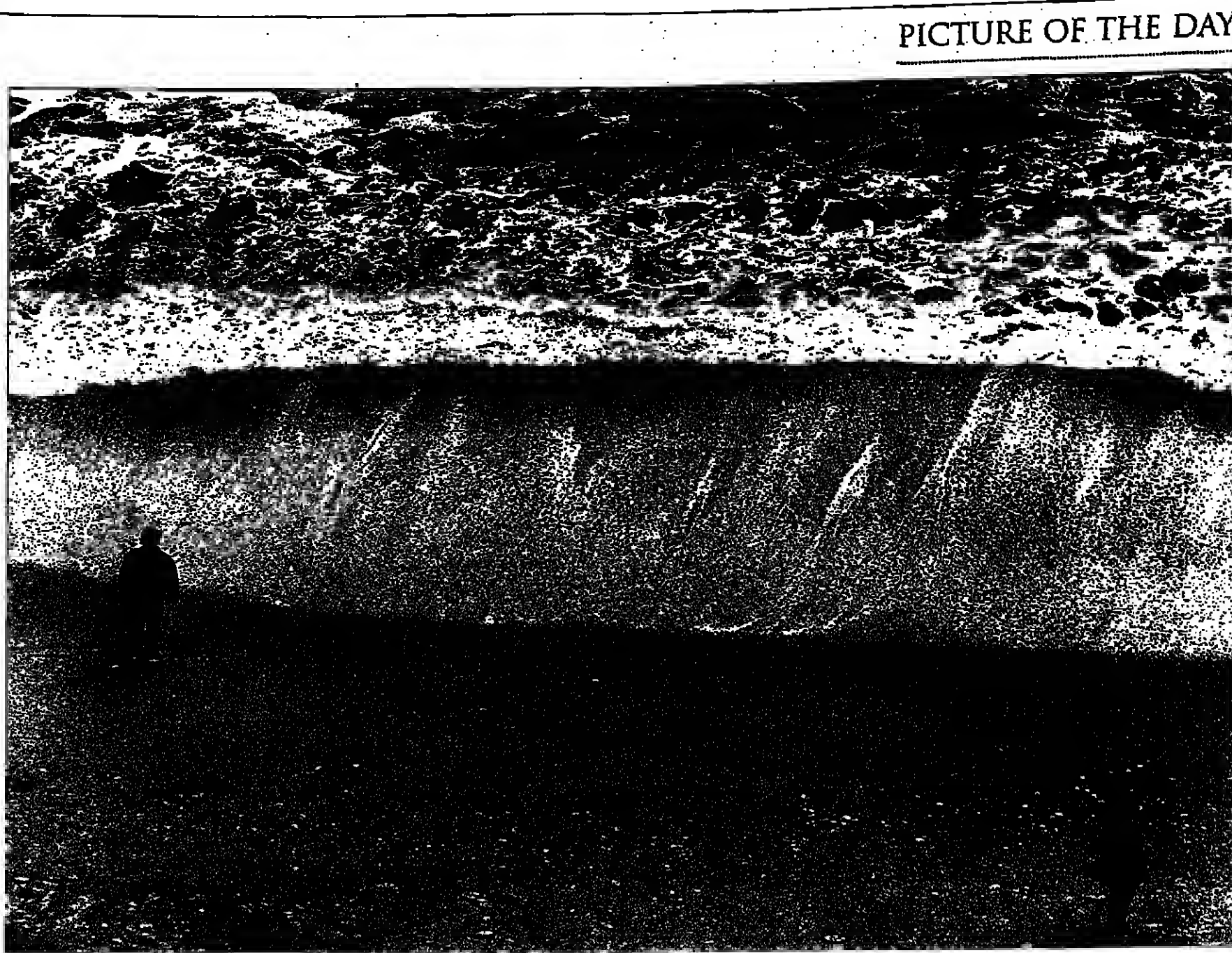
Man with Pen: (pausing and turning to Birt) What do you think, sir?

Birt: I haven't the faintest idea. I didn't see what he was driving at. If it's not in pseudo-managerial language, I can't understand it.

Man with Itch: My God, I never thought of that. We can't understand the Director General, because of the way he talks – and he can't understand us!

APOLOGY

I have now learnt that some of the above fly-on-the-wall, if not all of it, was in fact recreated using actors and hack writers. Those responsible will be fired.



Sand, sea and human figures: a view from the clifftops at Porthbeor beach on the St Anthony Peninsula in Cornwall

Photograph: John Voos
A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 0171-293 2534

PICTURE OF THE DAY

Cancer toll in Iraq

YOUR leading article of 5th March spoke of the possibility that the cancers in southern Iraq could have been caused by "the use by the Americans and their allies of depleted uranium shells", or that "the huge refinery fires that burned for weeks during the war may have released cancer-causing fumes".

There were far more oil well and refinery fires in Kuwait than in all of Iraq. The retreating Iraqi troops deliberately set fire to 715 Kuwaiti oil wells and three refineries, which took months, not weeks, to put out. There were tank battles, in which depleted uranium shells were used by the coalition forces, in Kuwait itself as well as southern Iraq. There were also heavy air bombardments of Iraqi troop concentrations all over Kuwait. None of this has caused an epidemic of cancers in Kuwait.

This suggests that the increase of cancers in southern Iraq is more probably due to the breakdown in Saddam Hussein's vast system of weapon manufacture. The low standards of safety in Iraqi chemical weapon factories and storage facilities shocked UN inspectors. Air bombardments on Iraq must have also released amounts of these terrible materials into the air.

Finally, we must not forget the horrifying effects of Saddam Hussein's deliberate use of chemical weapons against insurgents in the southern marshes of Iraq during the period 1991-94. These marshes are located in the southern provinces of Basra and Nasiriyah, precisely the areas that your reports cover.

AHMED HUSSEIN
London SW20

School agreements

THE SCHOOL Standards and Framework Bill is due for its third reading in the Commons within the next few days. If this Bill is enacted all school governing bodies will be required to draw up a home school "agreement" and a written "parental declaration". Governors will be required to ensure as far as possible that all parents sign the declaration, to put on record that the parents "ac-

cept and acknowledge" their "parental responsibilities" and the "school's expectation of its pupils".

We believe this requirement could lead to division rather than partnership between parent and school and will impose an extra administrative burden on schools.

Rather than the Government imposing this detailed legal requirement on all schools we want to see the Bill amended. Governing bodies should be required instead to draw up a home school policy, following a genuine consultation, which would include parents and staff. The statutory requirement for a parental declaration should be dropped. Then, parents, teachers and governors could decide for themselves at school level if they wished to have a signed agreement as part of their home school policy.

MARGARET MCGOWAN, *Advisory Centre for Education*; PAT BALL, *Alliance of Parents and Schools*; MARGARET TULLOCH, *Campaign for State Education*; ALAN DODD, *Parent Teacher Association of Wales*; PETER SMITH, *Association of Teachers and Lecturers*; NIGEL DE GRUCHY, *National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers*; DOUG McAVOY, *National Union of Teachers*; MARGARET JONES, *Institute of School and College Governors*; HADRIAN SOUTHERN, *National Association of Governors and Managers*; PAT PETCH, *National Governors' Council*
London SW20

Beyond the Dome

GRAHAM Wrathmell (letter, 27 February) criticises the Dome and asks where are the sports events, design, engineering and science, and arts projects for the Millennium.

The Dome is the single biggest project funded by the Millennium Com-

LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number
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mission and less attention has yet been given to the other projects which will take up the other 80 per cent of Millennium Commission funding. We are funding 186 capital projects including a new world-class stadium in Cardiff to host the Rugby World Cup in 1999, new art galleries such as the new Tate at Bankside (which I believe will be the best modern art gallery in the world) and many science centres such as the International Centre for Life in Newcastle.

Overall, the Commission is investing £2,000m in projects all over the country for the millennium and while the Dome will be the focus of international attention, we should not underplay these important projects already in construction across the UK.

MIKE O'CONNOR
Director, Policy and Corporate Affairs
The Millennium Commission
London SW1

Phone 'rip-offs'

THE DIRECTOR General of Ofcom, Don Cruickshank, is to be congratulated on referring mobile phone costs to the Monopolies Commission (report, 6 March).

The charges by Cellnet, BT and Vodafone, which Mr Cruickshank describes as a "rip off", involve another dimension not emphasised in recent reports. Of the five billion calls made from landlines to mobile telephones, a significant number connect to recorded messages stating "no one is available, please try later". For this useless service BT are charging the caller a premium rate of 32p per minute.

Last year my company received a bill from BT for over £190 for calls made by a temporary secretary frantic to contact her boyfriend, whom she was phoning every few minutes. Over a period of a few hours she incurred these exorbitant costs because he had turned off his phone and she was unable to leave a message. If she

had telephoned a landline and there was no reply no costs would have been incurred.

BT are required, as a matter of contract, to publish their charges but nowhere in their leaflets is it made explicit that a premium charge of 32p is made for every landline call made to a mobile phone that is turned off.

I and millions of others are being charged for this ingenious so-called service which is quite useless. Perhaps the Monopolies Commission should investigate.

PAUL WINNER
London SW1

Art for all

DAVID RODWAY (letter, 9 March) in his comments on Paul Valley's appreciation of the Gateshead *Angel of the North* does a disservice to art criticism.

His implication, that only those trained in art are qualified to assess art, ignores the popular and voluble interest in public works of art and the continued investment in them by local councils. Art is an expression, mirror and critique of a culture, and that culture embraces the man in the street as much as the academic in London.

JASON M REESE
Lecturer in Engineering
University of Aberdeen

Harmless dope

ANTHONY ALEXANDER (letter, 6 March) fears the demotivating and dispiriting effect of cannabis on regular users. He couldn't be more wrong. A year ago I had the pleasure of living for a time with a Moroccan farmer and his family. He and his co-workers smoked dope from dawn till dusk and had done so for years. They showed no lack of motivation and were great fun to get to know.

ROB MURPHY
Newcastle upon Tyne

It's Latin to them

THE IDEA of Latin as a common European second language (letters, 3, 4, 6 March) would be quite justifiably opposed by the Greeks: first because they have a perfectly good classical language of their own; and second because they were over part of the Western Empire where Latin was the language of trade and administration.

There is a temptation to assume that the new Europe is a recreation of the Latin West, but this ceased to be the case, if it ever was, when the Greeks came on board in 1983, and will be even less so with the accession of (say) Bulgaria and Romania, which like Greece were first Byzantine and then Ottoman before their independence in the last century.

It goes without saying that Latin's associations with the Catholic Church would also be unwelcome in countries with a largely Orthodox tradition. Europe can no longer afford to be identified with one strand of its culture.

HENRY WICKENS
Luxembourg

Lively competition

PAUL McCann says that "no one would seriously consider trying to revive Miss World in the Nineties" (report, 28 February).

Miss World is now arguably the most-watched annual television show in the world, with more than 2 billion viewers in over 150 countries. In this country, Sky believe that there is life in Miss World, for they televise it. We are alive and kicking, and if British terrestrial television cares to show Miss World on television and it doesn't get top rating of the night, we will donate £25,000 to the Variety Club children's charity.

ERIC MORLEY
Executive Chairman
Miss World
London W1

Watery Moon

SO WATER has been found on the Moon. Whatever else, please don't privatise it.

RICHARD WINSTONE
Stroud, Gloucestershire

What really goes on at the BBC – an absolutely, totally genuine fly-on-the-wall report

Failed your exams? Start a business in the playground



HAMISH
McRAE

IF AMERICAN education is so bad, why do foreigners flock to the US to study? The same question applies here. We worry about the quality of our education, but people come from all over the world to be educated in Britain.

There is one obvious and valid explanation - that the students who come to both countries do so because they are coming to the best universities. The problems in America and Britain are not with our elite universities which are excellent, but with the general mass of the school system. But I have seen several items in the last few weeks that suggest that there is a second and rather different reason for admiring both the US and the British education systems, the schools as well as the universities. This is that while we may be less effective at teaching "hard" skills, such as maths and science, than our Continental and East Asian rivals, we have become very good at fostering "soft" and "loose" skills, including creativity, intuition and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the returns on these skills will be even higher in the next couple of generations than they are now. Most people could be taught to become reasonably competent scientists; it is vastly harder to teach them to be successful entrepreneurs.

On conventional measures the US and UK school systems seem to be about the middle of the pack. There was a squall of stories ten days ago in the US after a report on comparative standards in education put the States towards the bottom of developed countries in maths and science, with the UK doing only a bit better. This is probably right, for there are pretty good comparative statistics going back to the 1960s. I have just seen the results of one such study, discussed at a conference on "Excellence in Education" hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York late last year and published in the March edition of its *Economic Policy Review*.

This study looks at test scores for several years between 1963 and 1991. The main conclusion I would draw is that there has been a general convergence of scores over this period. Back in the 1960s there were enormous differences between Australia, Sweden and the US at the bottom, and Israel, Japan and Belgium at the top. But by 1991 all the countries are clustered in the middle with not much distance between China and Korea at the top and Ireland and Portugal at the bottom.

The UK does not do at all badly in these charts. We suddenly shot to the top in 1985 and have been above the US right through this period. But I think the bigger message is not one about standards but one about comparative advantage. Given the narrowing of the spread of attainment, it has become pretty difficult to retain a significant national advantage in the teaching of "hard" subjects. I'm not saying the teaching of the three "Rs" is unimportant. Far from it. Rather the message

is that any competently-run educational system is going to do this adequately well. Comparative advantage will be in "soft" subjects.

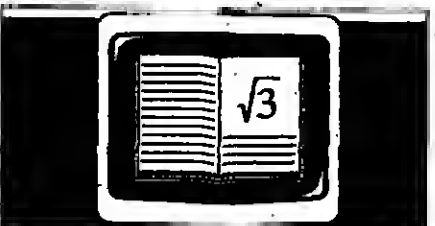
If that is right, educationalists are going to be asked a whole new set of questions, such as "How do you teach entrepreneurship?" To most people that very question will seem pretty odd. Imagine the University of Entrepreneurship of North London. Ridiculous?

Well, no, as two examples show. In Finland there is a government programme teaching people just this. There are lectures, seed funding for new ventures, even subsidies to new would-be entrepreneurs. Is this programme working? Er, not terribly well, I gather. A friend who lectures to these people reckons that it often simply encourages people to start businesses which only produce an adequate living because of subsidies from the taxpayer. But at least the Finns are trying.

The second example is Japan. There they have identified the lack of entrepreneurial zeal as one of the reasons why Japan has failed to recover from recession. They have adapted the word entrepreneur into *an-torepurenah* - don't laugh, we don't have a word in English either - and are now running lectures, courses, foreign visits, study groups and so on in an effort to generate the appropriate spirit.

Well there is certainly no shortage of entrepreneurship in the US or even the UK. How do we do it?

I suppose part of the impetus comes from



relatively low taxes on earned income, and an absence of regulations inhibiting business start-ups. But it can't just be that. I suspect that we teach it, sometimes explicitly, as in the business enterprises that schools run for sixth-formers, but sometimes without really knowing we are doing so. We certainly teach creativity: we have national prizes for creative writing in schools; we have tremendous emphasis on music and drama; we teach creativity in fashion and other design. But I sense that we are also trying to link this creativity with earning money by creating a culture in which people, especially young people, are encouraged to regard setting up a business in their spare time as a fun thing to do.

We have managed to create an educational system that accepts, and even fosters, an element of disorder and encourages questioning. It asks people to look at themselves and the world around them - and think of ways of earning their living other than slogging up corporate or government career ladders.

Isn't this what education should be about? Some people would be appalled at the idea of teaching people to become entrepreneurs. But encouraging people to think for themselves, testing received views, relishing argument and discussion - this is core stuff. It is not a long step beyond that to get people to look at society's needs and desires and use their intelligence to think of ways of satisfying these. Besides, if the Finns and the Japanese think this is a good idea there must be something in it.

Spare the Teletubbies: they've dumbed-up Watch with Mother

Children are more media literate than adults, says Suzanne Moore. They don't need the protection of censorship

I HAVE tried, I really have, to remember the golden age of children's television, a time of intellectually stimulating, frightfully educational programming which have since given way to the psychodelic spawn of Satan - Tinky Winky, Dipsy, Laa-Laa and Po. Before the devilishly marketed mutant Teletubbies took over we watched and we encouraged our children to watch... well what exactly? Those whistling socks - *The Clefters*? Those poorly drawn Ninja turtles? Those realistic male role models *Bill and Ben*? That horrid sexist *Postman Pat*? The class-ridden *Thomas the Tank Engine*?

The Teletubbies' biggest achievement is that they have become a symbol for those who want to argue that children's TV is "dumbing down". The fact that the Teletubbies are designed to appeal to preschool infants - to babies in other words, seems to have been forgotten. If the Teletubbies appeal to toddlers and wacky student types this may be due to the hard truth that compared to grown-ups, toddlers are quite dumb. But of course you mustn't say that because in this game every child is a regular little *tabula rasa* ready to have its head filled with the encyclopaedic knowledge that "proper" children's programmes should be full of.

So let's, in the words of Mrs Merton, have "a heated discussion" about all this nonsense. There has already been one this week at the World Summit on Television for Children. Quite delightfully in the midst of all this concern about what is correct and proper for children to watch, one female speaker, Alice Cahn of the American Public Service Broadcasting service PBS, called another speaker, Ada Haug, head of pre-school programmes in Norway "an ignorant slut" in an argument over - you've guessed it - the merits of *Teletubbies*. What a shame all this wasn't televised and put out just after *Blue Peter*. But then you can't have everything. An awful lot of tosh is spouted about children and television from people who should know better, yet the only way people will know better is if they sit down and actually watch what is on offer to their kids. No one expects to be a film critic without having seen any films. But everyone from stray MPs to right-wing watchdogs to concerned liberals gets to mouth off about programmes they have heard of but never seen, years of working at home have meant that I have watched a lot of kids' TV with my children. Years of lying in bed have also meant that my children have watched a lot of television without me present to monitor their every reaction. So that means that they are either terribly deviant or terribly average.

In my considered opinion children's television is getting better and better. Yes there are some pretty boring cartoons.



The Simpsons: Children cannot get away from being confronted with social issues

UPP

"Why don't the people in cartoons ever change their clothes, Mummy?" asked my youngest the other day, but there are also some good dramas, from *The Demon Headmaster* to *Byker Grove* to *The Phoenix* and *The Carpet*, which kids actually prefer to an unrelieved diet of cartoons. No kid these days can get away from being confronted with social issues, from drugs to abuse to prostitution. There is also a reluctance to admit that children after a hard day at school have just as much right

These princes of media literacy may be currently lauded - they are ironic and self-referential in their constant emphasis on the process of production itself. Now they stand out. Surely though, the coming generation will be so media literate that they will eat these guys for breakfast. "Media literacy" is what much of the debate is currently about, but we get it all the wrong way round. It isn't children who need to be taught media literacy: it's their anxious parents

night long, he or she is reading and maybe even writing.

I am not denying that there are genuine problems around children and the screen: the spectre of the global child who has no sense of locality or community has been conjured up. This is the child viewed purely as a consumer to be targeted by huge corporations. The mediated child also gets little exercise or direct experience of the complicated world that flickers before him or her and will have a different relationship to it than those who spend a mythical childhood climbing up apple trees.

The overriding concern continues to be censorship. Most parents act as censors of their children's viewing until the child reaches an age where regulation is no longer possible. Inevitably greater access - TV sets in every kid's bedroom - means that parents demand more regulation from broadcasters. We have lost control over what our kids see because new technologies are outstripping our ability to censor them.

Perhaps then we should approach all this the other way round. If our children are seeing far too much, much too young we should make more of an effort to engage with what they do want to watch even when we forbid them to watch it. This is the opposite of dumbing down. It means entering into some form of critical discussion of the material available to them. When you listen to what they say, they are rarely duped and rather sensible about what they value and what they don't. When I used to watch with mother I got *Andy Pandy*. When my kids watch with mother they get *The Simpsons*. If that counts as dumbing down I'll eat my shorts.

My kids have watched a lot of TV without me being present. So that means they are either terribly delinquent or terribly average

to be entertained as adults have. Pity the child whose every waking hour must be filled with educational activity. The work ethic now reinvested with Blairite zeal has filtered down to our children who are never allowed to be bored or idle or any of those states that might encourage something truly creative to enter their minds. The category of separate programming for children needs itself to be questioned. Who watches *Hollyoaks*, *The Big Breakfast*, *EastEnders*, *Casualty* and *Top of the Pops* if not children and teenagers? Zoo TV, that late-Eighties trend, was born out of the arranged marriage of Saturday morning kids' programmes and a generation of presenters like Chris Evans and Johnny Vaughan who instinctively understood how television worked long before they ever worked in the medium itself.

and teachers. Even the concept of Media Studies makes people nervous. The study of literature is still regarded as far more useful than the study of anything that emanates from a screen. Despite Brit Art and Brit design, we still place our trust in words rather than pictures, a residue of our profoundly puritanical and anti-visual culture. The message of those concerned with the medium must be that media literacy is not the enemy of good old fashioned literacy.

If we cannot live in a world where we get information and entertainment both on the page and on the screen, we will not get very far at all. Likewise if we always see one medium as infinitely superior to the other then we will lose out. Anyway, even if your virtual teenager has turned into a virtual nerd stuck in their virtual bedroom cruising the Net all

Why America's teenage girls can't get enough of 'Titanic'



MARY
DEJEVSKY

The boat may sink, but a new feminist role model has risen on the silver screen

AS AWARD after award speeds towards James Cameron for his epic blockbuster and Oscar-favourite, *Titanic*, a handful of critics are professing surprise. Not because of the scale of its success, nor because of the records it notches up week after week for takings and audiences. Nor yet because of the contrast between the dire warnings of failure and the glorious reality.

Almost three months after the film's release, the surprise comes from the complexion of the audiences. In front of cinemas across America, the winding queues comprise not jaggardly first-time viewers curious to see if what everyone else says about the film is true, but second, third, fourth and

fifth-timers, the vast majority of them teenage girls.

Now the easy explanation is that they have come for the sole purpose of drooling over the gorgeous looks and earthy natural charm of Leonardo DiCaprio, who plays Jack, the doomed hero from the lower orders. In other words, feminism - in terms of self-assertion - is dead; long live romance.

Having belatedly joined the titanic queues myself, I would like to venture that the explanation is more complicated, and perhaps more heartening for those of us on the disaffair side in the late Nineties. My bet, borne out subsequently by some gentle inquiry, is that all these girls are not frequenting the cinema only, or even main-

ly, for the sake of the luscious Leonardo. They are there quite as much for the leading lady, the lonely, stubborn Rose, torn between duty to family, class and convention, and her contempt for the whole charade.

Rose (played by Oscar-nominee Kate Winslet), with her mixture of self-doubt and forwardness, sense of responsibility and lust to break free, holds a particular appeal for America's young women, so many of whom find themselves stranded between aggressive self-assertion and wistful longing for romance. Rose is even a little more plump than your average American girl would like to be, but she seems comfortable with her body - another consoling thought for angst-ridden di-

eters for whom Barbie was the model.

The director, James Cameron, describes Rose as "muscle plus striking femininity". Her women fans are less abstract about it. "She was a daredevil. She went on to have adventures; she didn't waste her life," says Karen Schoemer in *Time* magazine. "She's so romantic, so real," says a young friend who recently saw the film for the sixth time. For America's teenage girls, Rose is the next century's woman in the making.

Something similar goes for the developing relationship between Jack and Rose. By turns conspiratorial and reckless, respectful and teasing, sexual (but always equal), it offers a fully acceptable road map in girl-boy re-

lations to emotionally confused and sexually hung-up Americans. And Jack is the ideal partner: encouraging adventure and self-reliance, displaying leadership and resourcefulness but also restraint and need. His last words to Rose, as he sinks into a watery *Liebestod*: Tell her never to let go, to make something of herself.

Would not every Nineties American girl want a mate like that? A mate who combines chivalry and romance with unfettered political correctness and pushes her to make the best of herself? No wonder the girls are out in force for *Titanic*. It's just a pity that the boys are not there too. They might learn about the sort of companionable devotion their girlfriends will now expect.

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IT IS NO SECRET that Lord Archer wants to be the mayor of London. Perhaps nobody in British history has ever campaigned more vigorously for a position which, as yet, does not exist. "I'm not a candidate. Yes, I am running," he told Pandora yesterday. There won't be any candidates until after the 7 May referendum tells us whether Londoners do or do not want to have an elected mayor.

Of course the polls show that a majority of Londoners will vote in favour of having a mayor. In the meantime, Archer's effort is entirely made up of volunteers, he says, including his new treasurer, wealthy businessman Greg Hinchings. "I haven't spent a penny," Archer assured me. "And I have written to Lord Neill, the Commissioner for Public Standards, to clarify this question of campaign expenses. He wrote back confirming that you can't be running until you're running." These somewhat tortuous linguistic



qualifications are absolutely necessary, for Archer is aware that he has enemies in Parliament who do not look fondly upon the prospect of him becoming London's mayor. Yesterday a parliamentary tongue wagged near Pandora's ear about a possible "snag" in Archer's plans.

At some point the Government, if there is going to be a mayoral election, will need to establish guidelines for candidates, including a limit on funds spent. (Prospective MPs are not allowed to spend more than £10,000 in contesting a general election. That's hardly a round of drinks to someone in Archer's financial league.) As with

parliamentary elections, it is expected that these mayoral spending limits will apply from the date a person first declares himself a candidate. According to Pandora's sources, some of Archer's opponents, reading of his "campaign trail" in the *Telegraph* on Saturday, licked their lips at the prospect of setting low spending limits that might have been exceeded by Archer long before the actual election in 1999 or 2000 came to pass. If they could prove something like that, they could move to have him disqualified from the race. But according to the master plotter of fictional tales, "We saw through that trap a long time ago." Repeat, he is not a candidate, but he's running.

THE UNIVERSITY of Cambridge has recently announced its set topics for the Sir William Browne Medal for Greek and Latin poems: "Exploring the Internet" (Greek) and "Cloning" (Latin). Pandora is accepting nominations for



a new award (the Teletubbies Medal?) for people who make education absurdly relevant to our age.

RUMBLES from the ranks in William Hague's "brand-new" Tory party. The leader has summoned Conservative agents from all over southern England to an all-day conference meeting at glamorous London Docklands Arena. Their mission will be to choose candidates from the region for

future Euro elections. The date set for this caucusing is the Friday before the summer's first bank holiday. Whose brilliant idea was this? Many of the agents are blaming Archie Norman, the party's new deputy chairman and workaholic boss of *Asda*. Just to make matters worse, in Hague's own constituency of Richmond, the boy leader is soon to introduce his own loyal "new-brand" agent.

PANDORA noticed that barrister Tony Baldry was one of the Tory MPs who successfully filibustered against the anti-hunting Bill last week. In fact, he spoke for an hour. Could this possibly be the same Tony Baldry who, several years ago, successfully deflected a woman hunt-saboteur, Caroline Wotton, who was charged with driving her car directly at bare coun-
ciler Sir Rupert Mackeson?

Pandora

CWC snubs Microsoft with software plans for digital TV internet access

By Peter Thal Larsen
and Michael Harrison

The UK's largest cable company yesterday delivered a snub to Microsoft by choosing software backed by Netscape and Oracle to power its new digital television service.

Cable & Wireless Communications, which has 760,000 cable television customers in the UK, will launch its digital service this autumn with software provided by Network Computer Inc, a joint venture between Netscape, best known for its internet browsers, and software group Oracle.

Subscribers will receive a digital set-top box for their television sets, giving them access to 200 channels. But with the NCI software - known as the DTV Navigator - they will also be able to surf the World Wide Web, send and receive e-mail, and eventually play games, make bets and do their shopping online.

Digital cable will be the third form of digital television to become available to viewers this year. Satellite broadcaster BSkyB will start transmitting a 200-channel digital service in June while British Digital Broadcasting, a joint venture between Carlton and Granada, plans to launch 30 channels in the autumn. Both suppliers also plan to offer interactive services.

Graham Wallace, chief executive of CWC, said that customers would have "more control, choice and flexibility in how and when they access a whole range of information and entertainment services - all through their existing TV sets."

Industry analysts welcomed the move. "They're taking cable beyond being just a telephone service like BT or a pay-TV service like Sky," said James Ross, an analyst with ABN Amro. CWC shares closed up 3p at 351p.

The announcement is a setback for Microsoft, which has been attempting to corner the market for set-top box software through WebTV, the software company it took over last year. The UK market is seen as particularly crucial because it is leading the world in the introduction of digital television.

Microsoft has been talking to a number of British broadcasters, including BDB and Flextech, the programme packager, about supplying them with the capability to launch interactive services. Last night, a spokeswoman for WebTV said the company was talking to "a variety of people" but was not ready to make any announcements.

Mr Wallace said: "We've had extensive talks with Microsoft, and they effectively said there was no way they could provide a product for our launch in 1998." He added that CWC had "chosen the best product available" though the company did not "want to be in anybody's pocket".

Mr Wallace said interactive services were the key to increasing use of CWC's existing network. "We have had a high capacity network, and until now have just chugged a few television channels along it." The DTV Navigator will provide CWC's digital customers with access to an electronic programming guide - an advanced form of teletext. From there, they will be able to access interactive services like games and on-demand movies as well as jump to sites on the World Wide Web.

CWC is expected to launch the service this autumn after conducting trials throughout the summer. One advantage will be that, unlike BSkyB and BDB, customers will not have to spend £200 on the set-top box required to receive the service. CWC currently rents boxes to its customers and takes them back



David Roux of Network Computers Inc (left) and Graham Wallace of Cable & Wireless

Photograph: Kristian Buis

if they no longer require the service.

Mr Wallace said CWC was considering charging less than £10 a month - the current standard charge - for internet access even though CWC's service will offer connection at 20 times the speed of the most powerful modem available.

Yesterday Greg Clarke, CWC's chief operating officer, said the company was talking to a "long line" of leading com-

panies about providing their services on-line next year.

CWC's service will compete with that provided by BSkyB, which plans to launch its own interactive services through a joint venture with British Telecom, Midland Bank and Matsushita.

The venture, called British Interactive Broadcasting, will provide internet access and a range of services from home shopping and banking to edu-

cational, sporting, entertainment and public service information. The launch is subject to approval from regulatory authorities in Brussels.

BIB is in talks with up to 30 content providers including Sainsbury, HMV, Thomas Cook, Great Universal Stores and Dording Kindersley, the educational publisher.

The four partners in BIB have put up £265m to develop the service and help subsidise

the cost of the set-top boxes needed to receive digital satellite services. The set-top box will be connected to an ordinary telephone line which in turn provides access to the internet.

This means that it will take longer to get onto the internet than through CWC's service. But BT is conducting trials with a range of more advanced technologies that provide much greater capacity and quicker access.

Trials with a technology

known as ADSL, which compresses signals and makes the traditional copper wire pair work like "a modem on steroids" begin this summer in west London.

At present there are an estimated 1.8 million personal computers linked to the internet. But BT forecasts that within five years there will be 3.5 million set-top boxes and integrated televisions in use providing internet access and 14 million by 2010.

Trials with a technology

Writs may fly after Grabiner stalks out of United

By Peter Thal Larsen

Stephen Grabiner, the United News & Media executive who has been appointed to run British Digital Broadcasting, the television group, has left United News without working out his contract and may launch legal action against the company.

Mr Grabiner is believed to have cleared his desk earlier this week after becoming increasingly frustrated with the delays in negotiating his departure from the group. He was named as chief executive of BDB, the joint venture between broadcasters Carlton and Granada, at the end of January. At the time United News said Mr Grabiner would work out his 12-month notice period, keeping him at United News until the beginning of 1999 - several months after BDB's planned launch date.

United News and BDB have subsequently been negotiating the release of Mr Grabiner from his contract. Industry analysts believe that Lord Hollick, United's chief executive, hoped to use Mr Grabiner as a bargaining chip to improve his position in the digital television market. United submitted a bid to operate Digital Terrestrial Television, but lost out to BDB.

The deadlock is understood to have frustrated Mr Grabiner, who was poached from Telegraph Group, the newspaper publisher, two years ago to run United's newspaper interests. His responsibilities were also reduced substantially last month when United completed the sale of its regional newspaper division, effectively leaving Mr Grabiner in charge of little more than the Express titles and the Daily Star.

Mr Grabiner is understood to be considering using the disposal as grounds for legal action. One industry source said: "You might think that having three-quarters of the profits sold from under you is akin to constructive dismissal. They certainly have not offered him a position of equivalent status."

It is unclear whether Mr Grabiner is preparing to take up his post at BDB ahead of schedule. The broadcaster, which is planning the nationwide launch of its 30-channel service in the autumn, is currently being run by Nigel Wamsley, a Carlton executive.

Mr Grabiner could not be reached for comment last night. A spokesman for United said the company had nothing new to add.

Midshires wavers as board considers £780m Halifax bid

By Lea Paterson

THE BOARD of Birmingham Midshires met last night to give "preliminary consideration" to Halifax's attempt to prise the building society away from the grip of the Royal Bank of Scotland. The Midshires directors are expected to decide whether to break a legal agreement signed by both themselves and the Royal Bank of Scotland last August.

Under terms of that agreement, Midshires is not allowed to hold formal talks, or exchange information with, a third party. The most likely outcome is that Midshires will ask Royal Bank to release it from parts of the agreement, rather than break the contract, a source close to the discussions said.

It is believed that, if Midshires broke the contract, it could be hit by a penalty fee. A Midshires spokesperson said the board would not immediately decide whether to recommend the Halifax bid to its members over the Royal Bank bid.

The Royal Bank agreed in August to pay a price of between £615m and £630m for Birmingham Midshires. On Monday

evening Halifax launched a £780m rival bid, saying that Royal Bank "significantly under-valued" the building society. The Royal Bank said it will not raise its offer "under any circumstances". Halifax said that because of the agreement between the Royal Bank and Birmingham Midshires, its offer had necessarily been based on publicly available information.

David Gilchrist, Halifax's group secretary, hinted his company could walk away from the deal if it could not talk through details of the offer with Midshires. He said: "They [Midshires] would have to be released from this sort of restriction for this to proceed in any sensible way."

However, the Royal Bank gave the impression of standing firm on the legal agreement between itself and Midshires. In a statement released yesterday morning, the bank said it had a "binding agreement" with Midshires. It added: "Royal Bank Group and Birmingham Midshires continue to work together towards submitting the Royal Bank Group's proposals to Birmingham Midshires' members as soon as possible".



Peter George: Purchase of Coral was unconditional

Ladbroke referral to the MMC looks like a sure bet

By Andrew Yates

Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, is poised to refer Ladbroke's £362.7m acquisition of the Coral betting chain to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission over fears it will give the group a monopoly in the betting industry.

A referral could be announced this week after an preliminary investigation of the deal by the Office of Fair Trading. The Government could force Ladbroke to divest of hundreds of betting shops to overcome competition concerns or could require it to sell the

whole of the 833-strong Coral estate. Ladbroke, led by Peter George, controls 2,600 betting shops, or 35 per cent of the total UK market after signing an unconditional deal to buy 833 Coral shops from Bass on New Year's Eve. It had hoped to avoid an MMC inquiry by selling 133 of its betting shops to the Tote. Ladbroke claims disposal of these sites means it conforms to the "quarter-mile rule" laid down by the MMC when Mecca merged with William Hill in 1989.

This stipulated that a bookmaker could not have more than one shop within a 440 yard

radius of another branch and was aimed at ensuring no one was able to establish a local monopoly. Until a few weeks ago, Ladbroke was confident this would be enough to avert an MMC inquiry. But sources suggest the group is resigned to the fact that its betting business will face months of uncertainty as a full-scale investigation gets underway. The acquisition has raised concerns among senior cabinet ministers. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary and a horse-racing fan, has publicly voiced worries about the deal and Alan Meale, another Labour MP, has led the attack

against the acquisition. One source said: "A referral now seems inevitable. Political pressure is growing for an MMC referral which is likely to lead to more divestments."

The Coral purchase has also caused an outcry from rivals in the industry, including William Hill, now owned by Nomura, the Japanese bank. Analysts believe there would be no shortage of buyers for any shops that Ladbroke is forced to sell. The Tote is known to be keen to expand its estate, as is Stanley Leisure, currently the third biggest player in the market, and William Hill.

Poor pay dearly for tobacco addiction and cough up out of all proportion on duty

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Higher tobacco duty falls more heavily on the poor because the richest third of the population has more or less given up smoking, while the bottom fifth are puffing away as heavily as ever, according to a report funded by the cigarette lobby.

The Fair Cigarette Tax Campaign, the lobby group financially supported by tobacco manufacturers, will use the claims as ammunition against further increases in duty. The reports also claims the

increases in real terms - started by the Conservatives and continued by the present government - are boosting illegal imports from abroad, at a cost in lost tax receipts of £690m a year.

The findings, based on research by London Economics, a consultancy firm, suggest high tobacco taxes redistribute the burden from the rich to the poor. The duty paid by the top 30 per cent of the income distribution has fallen since 1993, even though rates of duty have climbed. The amount paid by the 20 per cent at the bottom

has increased over the same period, and these households spend more every week on tobacco and tobacco tax than better-off households.

The poorest tenth of the population spend just under 14 per cent of their income on tobacco tax, compared to less than half a per cent for the richest tenth.

The pattern of spending means that every increase in the duty makes it an ever more regressive tax, penalising the poor more than the rich.

The report was financed by Philip Morris.

Wetherspoon rues its TV-free ambience as World Cup fever threatens to drive punters to other pubs

By Andrew Yates

The World Cup football championship in France this summer promises to provide a bonanza for the betting and leisure industry - but there is one person who will not be cheering.

Tim Martin, chairman of JD Wetherspoon, the pub chain that has banned TV screens and music from its pubs, yesterday admitted the feast of football will cost the group dear, with drinkers switching to rival hostellers who are willing to show the games. "If Gazza breaks into tears again our

sales will suffer. In 1990 sales dipped by 10 per cent a week during the World Cup. This time it could be worse and it will have an effect on second half profits," he said yesterday. Mr Martin also admitted the group had fallen foul of the Trading Standards Office.

Wetherspoon has spent £700,000 introducing new glasses marked with a line indicating a pint measure. The pub chain started an advertising campaign with the slogan "We offer 5 per cent more beer here." However the posters incurred the wrath of trading

standards offices, who questioned the group's claims. In the end they had to be torn down.

Wetherspoon plans to open 50 pubs in the next six months, including what it claimed would be the first new purpose-built site in central Newcastle since Roman times. It is on track to have 500 outlets by 2001 after one of the fastest expansion programmes the pub industry has ever seen.

However it has shelved plans to take the chain overseas and open pubs in Paris.

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STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5807.70	-12.90	-0.22	5848.90	4182.10	3.16
FTSE 250	5281.40	-26.80	-0.51	5254.80	4384.20	2.97
FTSE 350	2780.00	-2.40	-0.09	2792.20	2075.70	3.13
FTSE All Share	2778.97	-1.84	-0.07	2778.98	2165.07	3.11
FTSE Smallcap	2484.70	5.50	0.22	2479.30	2182.10	2.80
FTSE Personal	1380.20	1.50	0.11	1358.80	1225.20	3.18
FTSE AIM	1014.70	4.40	0.44	1136.50	955.90	0.99
Dow Jones	8594.83	-34.38	-0.40	8566.89	6356.78	1.62
Nikkei	17168.33	-96.01	-0.55	20910.79	14489.21	0.80
Hong Kong	11425.46	105.62	0.94	16820.31	7969.13	3.44
Dax	4757.14	20.40	0.43	4745.20	3192.38	1.80

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
3 month 1 yr 5 yr	3 month 1 yr 5 yr	3 month 1 yr 5 yr
UK 7.56 1.21 7.57 0.84 6.10 -1.13 6.03 -1.37	UK 5.89 0.14 5.81 -0.19 5.77 -0.80 6.07 -0.78	UK 0.78 0.27 0.73 0.16 1.88 -0.71 2.32 -0.70
Germany 3.51 0.26 1.37 0.46 4.96 -0.57 5.55 -0.79		

CURRENCIES

\$/£	DM/£	¥/£
at 5pm	at 5pm	at 5pm
Dollar 1.6525 +0.0001 1.6178	1.9379 +0.0001 1.9379	161.00 +0.00 161.00
at 5pm	at 5pm	at 5pm
at 5pm	at 5pm	at 5pm

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.3577	Italy (lire)	2.867
Austria (schillings)	20.37	Japan (yen)	205.82
Belgium (francs)	59.83	Malta (lira)	0.6293
Canada (\$)	2.2485	Netherlands (guilders)	3.2663
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8454	Norway (kroner)	12.12
Denmark (kroner)	11.12	Portugal (escudos)	204.47
Finland (markka)	8.8677	Spain (pesetas)	245.11
France (francs)	9.7244	South Africa (rand)	7.8000
Germany (marks)	2.9090	Sweden (kroner)	12.78
Greece (drachmas)	459.79	Switzerland (francs)	3.2725
Hong Kong (\$)	12.27	Turkey (lira)	369.367
Ireland (pounds)	1.1642	USA (\$)	1.5964

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only



OUTLOOK

The hidden costs of pensions mismanagement

Almost everyday brings another shocker of a revelation about the previous government's privatisation programme, it seems. Last week we learned that no proper valuation was done ahead of the sale of the rolling stock leasing companies, with the result that the public purse was seriously short changed. Today we are told that the Government's privatisation of the water authorities in the late 1980s has left the taxpayer with a hidden £420m pensions liability. Whatever next?

Both these disclosures are made by the National Audit Office, the Government's financial watchdog. Its report on water privatisation makes particularly fascinating reading, if only because the NAO itself in the immediate aftermath of the water flotations said a fair price had been realised under the circumstances and everything was generally hunky dory. In the murky world of the public finances, it transpires, nothing is ever that simple; it now appears the taxpayer was ripped off after all.

The story bears some repeating. Prior to privatisation, the water industry ran a collective pension scheme which because it was largely unfunded was showing a hefty deficit. Since the water companies couldn't be privatised with unfunded pension liabilities, it was decided to break up the fund

into fully funded water company schemes and a closed fund that would be left in the public sector to meet the liabilities of existing pensioners. So far, so good.

The problem arose on the division of assets. What happened was that the water companies took all the decent assets - largely equities and cash - for themselves, leaving the public sector fund with a lot of dodgy property and underperforming equities. If this had been done deliberately by the Government it might have seemed bad enough, but in fact it was done by a process of subterfuge. The company that divided up the assets, Queen Anne's Gate Asset Management, was owned by the water companies themselves.

The upshot was that a public sector liability of less than £100m at the time of transfer was with dispatch turned into a much larger one when the bottom dropped out of the property market in the early 1990s. This was compounded further by very poor management of the fund. The end result is that by 2005 the public sector part of what remains of the water industry pension scheme will have run out of assets but will still have £420m of liabilities to meet.

All this may seem of little more than academic interest so long after the event.

We kind of already knew, or at least suspected, that the way these privatisations were accounted for in the public finances was a fiddle. But plainly there are lessons here too. The public sector has responsibility for managing pension funds with liabilities of well over £100bn. If the mismanagement of water industry pension assets is anything to go by, there could be an awfully large pensions tab in the making for future generations to pick up.

By mid summer, the Financial Services Authority will be largely up and running. Five of the nine organisations it will eventually encompass will have moved in together at the FSA's new London docklands headquarters in Canary Wharf, and to all intents and purposes the FSA is already operating as a single regulator for the City and financial services industry.

All of which may seem rather odd given that the legislation that brings the FSA into existence and gives it powers won't be published until the Autumn and is unlikely to receive the Royal Assent until the following summer. Is this not putting the cart just a little bit before the horse? The Commons Treasury Select Committee is beginning to think it might be and has belatedly decided it ought to be monitor-

ing the progress of this at present almost wholly unaccountable beast.

Parliament is one thing. The advent of the FSA seems to be going largely unheeded in the City too. What with all those sackings, restructurings and mergers, not to mention having to deal with the millennium bug and preparing for the Euro, City folk may have more important matters on their hands. Howard Davies, chairman of the FSA, is meticulous about consulting on all the FSA's initiatives. But if the City doesn't bother to make its voice heard, it will only have itself to blame if Mr Davies fails to get the structure right.

When Ladbroke bought the Coral betting shop business from Bass at the start of the year, it was effectively betting that the deal would not be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. So confident was Ladbroke's chief executive Peter George that the deal would escape regulatory scrutiny that he agreed to make the purchase unconditional and duly handed over £363m of the folding stuff to the vendors.

As an each way bet, however, Mr George also agreed to dispose of 133 of Coral's shops to the Tote, so that the deal conformed with the "quarter mile rule" - the requirement that no single company

should own more than one betting shop within a 440 yard radius. The rule was established in 1989 when William Hill merged with Mecca to become number two in the market.

Even after the Tote deal, however, Ladbroke plus Coral still dwarfs other players in the industry with an estate of some 2,600 shops and a market share of around 35 per cent. This is the sort of figure that makes an automatic MMC referral an odds on favourite.

The Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, a keen race-goer and one-time newspaper tipster, has already intimated that the deal should be examined. With Margaret Beckett as President of the Board of Trade, he is pushing at an open door. Ladbroke could probably offload quite a few more shops to satisfy the MMC and not suffer a loss. But if the MMC orders a large-scale disposal then Ladbroke will be forced into a fire sale, made worse by the fact that William Hill, the other big player, would face much the same regulatory burdens. When Bass was prevented from acquiring Carlsberg Toteley it at least had a fall-back position that allowed it to sell back the business to Carlsberg and Allied. Mr George has no such escape route. For a bookie, this is turning into quite a gamble.

MCI acts to calm fears over WorldCom deal

MCI, the US telecoms giant, moved to reassure investors its \$37bn (£22bn) acquisition by WorldCom was still on track despite reports of competition concerns at the US Justice Department. Regulators have widened their probe into the deal, with particular regard to the Internet. The European Commission is also investigating the proposed deal. MCI said it still expected the deal to go through by the middle of the year. WorldCom made its bid after a 1996 offer for MCI by British Telecom went sour last year when BT lowered its offer.

Crédit Lyonnais staff sue

Staff at Crédit Lyonnais, the French bank, are taking their employer to court to force it to reveal details of restructuring proposals. It has made proposals to the European Commission in return for authorisation of additional state aid. A representative of the staff union said it was "unacceptable" Crédit Lyonnais employees had been unable to obtain copies of the proposals.

Independent Insurance surge

Shares in Independent Insurance Group surged by 10 per cent after it unveiled better than expected first-half results. Operating pre-tax profits rose by 38 per cent to £58.3m in the year to December. Shares closed at 139.5p, up 140p.

Kingfisher looks east

Kingfisher, the retail group that includes B&Q, Woolworths, Comet and Superdrug, opened its Asian head office in Hong Kong and said it was looking for acquisition opportunities in the region. Geoffrey Mulcahy, chief executive, said: "The Asian financial crisis hasn't changed our faith in this particular place."

Transworld drops takeover

Transworld HealthCare has called off talks on a possible takeover of Healthcall Group, the UK healthcare-services provider. The healthcare provider, which last week said it was considering a £58.5m bid, said it had "no present intention" to make a bid. The offer would have been worth 105p a share. Healthcall shares fell 12p to 87.5p. Transworld's decision leaves HCMS, a company set up by Healthcall's management to acquire the company, as the only bidder.

Williams sheds NuTone

Williams, the fire protection and security group, signalled its retreat from home-improvement services with the \$242m (£148m) sale of its NuTone subsidiary. The American door chimes to bathroom cabinets business has gone to US building products group Nortek. Further disposals from the home improvement division are being lined up by Williams. Strong organic growth and the speedy integration of the huge Chubb acquisition sent shares up 22p to end at 410p.

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DTI bearing down

The Department of Trade and Industry said it would refer the proposed acquisition of T&N by Federal-Mogul Corp of the US to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission unless it was given suitable undertakings to allay competition concerns. Nigel Griffiths, competition and consumer affairs minister, said the merger gave rise to competition concerns in relation to "thinwall" engine bearings. He is seeking undertakings from Federal-Mogul that it will sell all T&N's European thinwall bearings business.

LME tackles market abuse

The London Metal Exchange issued a consultation document detailing steps already taken on greater transparency, and seeking views on solutions to market abuse. The LME set out various possible measures for tackling issue of how to intervene when there is possible market manipulation and abuse, which it classifies as market aberrations. The LME asked for views on market aberrations in October 1997 after a review by the Securities and Investments Board following the £1.6bn Sumitomo Corp copper scandal.

London lures media group

Scottish Media Group, which owns the Glasgow Herald and controls two Scottish ITV franchises, is looking to increase its presence in London. The company, which recently sold its 18 per cent stake in Ulster Television after failing to get the ITV group's approval for a 240p a share bid, said it was looking at a wide range of potential deals.

Profits of doom

The flotation of Guardian IT, which helps rescue damaged computers and keep systems running after a disaster, has attracted City interest. The company yesterday said it had raised £44.4m through a placing and employee offer which values the company at £130.5m. Guardian, which was bought out from the company at £130.5m. Guardian, which was bought out from computer giant ICL by its management for £21m in 1995, provides standby computers and alternative workplaces to companies who have suffered a disaster.

Union plc results

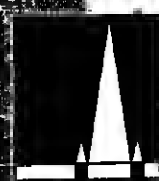
It in a year
significant change

Gross premium income
Operating earnings before tax
Profits before tax
Earnings per share
Dividend per share
Notional full year dividend per share
Shareholders' net assets

Full year
1997
£'million

Full year
1996
£'million

£1,000 million
up 19%, in local currency terms
as results
£49.2 billion
£1.00 per share



NORWICH
UNION

100 Victoria Street, Norwich NR1 3NG

Address: <http://www.norwich-union.co.uk>

The audited statutory accounts (or the Supplementary Financial Statement) will be circulated to shareholders.

[illegible]

Learn
from the
experts.

Jim Slater, Terry Smith and Alvan Hall are just some of the speakers at The 1998 Private Investors Conference. Sponsored by Charles Schwab, and supported by Bloomberg Money, this unique event is on Saturday 25th April 1998. Tickets start at only £15, but places are limited. Call 0870 606 4444 for details, quoting ref. IN150.

Charles Schwab **Bloomberg**
MONEY

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Starting Spot	1 month		3 month	Dollar Spot		1 month	3 month	D-M Index
		1 month	3 month		1 month	3 month			
UK	10000				06049	06058	06076	06083	0330
AU	24352	24291	24260	24290	14776	14782	14781	14781	1478
U.S.	21012	21012	21012	21012	2732	2732	2732	2732	2732
Canada	21482	21545	21545	21545	37343	37343	37343	37343	3734
Canada	22424	22419	22419	22419	14891	14891	14891	14891	1489
ECU	16400				33764	33762	33762	33762	3376
ECU	1519	1507	1498	1498	10835	10848	10848	10848	1084
Finland	50737	50700	50700	50700	14781	14781	14781	14781	1478
France	10000	5694	5695	5695	60650	60644	60633	60633	6063
Germany	29331	29509	29505	29505	13538	13538	13538	13538	1353
Germany	29331	29509	29505	29505	78839	78839	78839	78839	7883
Hong Kong	22604	22739	22810	22810	72445	72445	72445	72445	7244
India	12155	12242	12242	12242	13575	13575	13575	13575	1357
Italy	23416	23416	23416	23416	19715	19715	19715	19715	1971
Japan	20532	20576	20617	20617	3301	3245	3245	3245	3245
Malaysia	6247	6269	6248	6248	37750	37300	37300	37300	3730
Netherlands	33759	33693	33693	33693	21038	21037	21037	21037	2103
Netherlands	27514	27501	27501	27501	14781	14781	14781	14781	1478
New Zealand	2477	2477	2477	2477	75459	75345	75344	75344	7534
Portugal	30611	30536	30536	30536	8535	8498	8498	8498	8498
South Africa	65006	65006	65006	65006	14781	14781	14781	14781	1478
Spain	17782	17749	17749	17749	19457	19448	19448	19448	1944
South Africa	65006	65006	65006	65006	49800	49800	49800	49800	4980
Spain	29533	29533	29533	29533	14781	14781	14781	14781	1478
Sweden	24270	24270	24270	24270	73600	73721	73567	73567	7356
Switzerland	24270	24270	23975	23975	14690	14616	14616	14616	1461

Other Spot Rates

Country	Starting	Dollar	Country	Starting	Dollar
Argentina	16533	10000	Oran	68394	0.3550
Brazil	19882	13000	Pakistan	72765	440000
China	12688	82790	Philippines	65388	393500
Czech Rep	56055	33305	Poland	37593	543535
Egypt	52607	32697	Russia	65400	100000
France	39327	20000	Saudi Arabia	10269	29900
Hungary	34481	20558	South Korea	26778	149870
India	65206	39440	Taiwan	32449	31868
Indonesia	145787	90000	Thailand	71525	43500
Israel	0.0043	0.0001	Turkey	39225	23310
Japan	13848	84000	UAE	67002	38790

Interest Rates

UK		Germany		US		Japan	
Base	725%	Discount	250%	Prime	850%	Discount	050%
France		Lombard	450%	Discount	500%	Belgian	
Intervention	330%	Canada		Fed Funds	589%		275%
Italy		Prime	650%	Spain		Central	330%
Discount	550%	Discount	500%	10-d Repo	450%	Switzerland	
Netherlands		Denmark		Sweden		Discount	100%
SwAdVance	330%	Discount	350%	Repo(Ave)	436%	Lombard	275%

Bond Yields

Country	3mth	1 yr	2 yr	5 yr	10 yr	
Australia	430	-002	499	627	698	614
Belgium	382	020	376	420	445	501
Canada	430	-002	499	627	698	614
ECU	434	030	-028	424	469	028
France	000	343	-030	424	469	028
Germany	430	-002	499	627	698	614
Italy	580	-001	603	622	477	-021
Japan	430	-002	499	627	698	614
Norway	430	-002	499	627	698	614
Sweden	430	-002	499	627	698	614
Switzerland	430	-002	499	627	698	614
UK	430	-002	499	627	698	614
USA	430	-002	499	627	698	614
West Germany	430	-002	499	627	698	614
Yugoslavia	430	-002	499	627	698	614

Money Market Rates

	Overnight	1 week	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
Treasury Bills			226 701	725 700		
LIBOR						
Domestic Depos	634 706	219 731	741 747	747 753	747 753	750 757
Eurosterling Depos	723 736	234 741	741 753	750 756	750 756	750 757
Eighteen Bank Bills			731 735	732 736	732 736	
Swelling CDs			740 744	742 746	747 751	
European CDs			561 561	561 561		
ECU Deposits			426 426	426 426	426 426	

Liffe Financial Futures[illegible]

Life FISE 100 Index Option
Settlement Price: 5807.70

Series	Mar				Apr		May		Jun	
	Call	Imp Vol	Pst	Imp Vol	Call	Pst	Call	Pst	Call	Pst
5750	182	21	47	19	231	103	289	144	352	180
5800	124	18	82	18	201	128	258	183	320	198
5850	94	19	83	17	171	142	227	182	289	217
5900	67	18	108	17	141	163	195	202	257	236

Commodity Indices

Index	1970=100	1983=100	1977=100	1970=100	1983=100	1977=100
Agricultural	164.72	-0.23	-0.14	215.26	-23.48	
Energy	224.69	-0.82	-0.36	231.23	-2.83	
Ind Metals	5708	0.16	0.18	65.86	-33.52	
Livestock	151.73	0.00	0.00	168.79	-10.1	
Prec Metals	161.34	-1.56	-0.96	191.03	-15.65	
	402.24	-4.56	-1.12	468.54	-13.22	

Energy

Brent Crude(\$/barrel)				Gas oil(\$/tonne)				WTI Crude(\$/barrel)				Products(\$/tonne)				
FE	Close	Chg	Vol	FE	Close	Chg	Vol	WTI	Close	Chg	Vol	Product	Spot	CF	NW	EW
Apr	14.08	0.03	59063	Mar	19.50	-0.50	4548	Apr	13.40	0.05		Gasoline	85			83.00
May	14.48	0.06	6891	Apr	13.75	-0.25	4842	May	13.9	0.08		Naphtha				15.00
Jun	14.82	0.05	2782	May	13.25	-0.50	1088	Jun	13.12	0.01		Gasol				13.00
								Jul	13.40	0.07		Fuel Oil (55%)				67.00

LME (Stone) Cash

	1445	1446	-200	14805	1461	-7	56740	-202
Aluminum HG	288	223	-70	126	1300	-5	42880	0
Aluminum Alloy	1730	1731	4230	1734	1754	47	37125	-372
Copper A	5395	5405	-300	547	548	-1	109800	500
Lead	5235	5230	-4500	5345	5350	-45	65780	70
Nickel	6435	5440	10340	5435	5440	100	9880	-70
Ti	13305	13315	-600	1058	1057	-5	469575	-100
Zinc								

Precious Metals

per lb/\$ per oz			per lb/\$ per oz			Coins (\$)				
	Day's chg	Year's chg		Day's chg	Year's chg		Day's chg	Yr's trade chg		
Platinum	38400	-4.00	-9.50	Platinum	232.75	-2.40	-6.25	Kruggerands	239705	-65.20
Palladium	234.50	0.00	84.75	Palladium	142.30	0.00	48.00	Sovs	89.80	
Silver	6.50	-0.01	19.19	Silver	3.94	-0.05	0.07	Nobles	37405	
Gold	29700	-1.35	-62.40					Maple Leaf	311.05	-61.43

Agricultural

LIFE			Starkey			Potatoes			Lign Potatoes		
UPPE	\$/cwt	UPPE	\$/cwt	UPPE	\$/cwt	UPPE	\$/cwt	UPPE	\$/cwt	UPPE	\$/cwt
Mar/8	103000	Mar/8	109000	Mar/8	7500	Mar/8	7000	Mar/8	5250	Mar/8	65000
Apr/8	102000	Apr/8	105000	Apr/8	7500	Apr/8	7000	Apr/8	5250	Apr/8	65000
Jul/8	107000	Jul/8	105000	Jul/8	7500	Jul/8	7000	Jul/8	5250	Jul/8	65000
Vol	3217	Vol	10703	Vol	22	Vol	83	Vol	83	Vol	40259
White Starkey			Freight			Wheat			Corn		
UPPE	\$/cwt	UPPE	\$/cwt	UPPE	\$/cwt	UPPE	\$/cwt	UPPE	\$/cwt	UPPE	\$/cwt
Mar/8	27000	Mar/8	105000	Mar/8	7200	Mar/8	26800	Mar/8	2500	Mar/8	2500
Apr/8	27000	Apr/8	105000	Apr/8	7200	Apr/8	26800	Apr/8	2500	Apr/8	2500
Jul/8	27000	Jul/8	105000	Jul/8	7200	Jul/8	26800	Jul/8	2500	Jul/8	2500
Vol	3495	Vol	10	Vol	622	Vol	28075	Vol	28075	Vol	28075

100 Largest Insurance Funds

[illegible]

Bookmakers windy about Blowing

By Greg Wood

PUNTERS are often dubious about just how much money the bookies have taken when a horse shortens in an ante-post list, but the whole process reached its logical — if somewhat bizarre — conclusion yesterday when the odds against a runner in Saturday's Imperial Cup at Sandown were cut almost in half, even though the bookmaker in question had not laid a single penny for it.

The horse in question was Blowing Wind, trained by Martin Pipe, who was an 8-1 chance in the first list issued by William Hill yesterday, with the book due to open this morning. On a subsequent press release, it even seemed that he had drifted out to 10-1, but by yesterday

evening, he was down to 9-2, after the firm's odds-setters had a close look at the race. A long cut Blowing Wind to 4-1 yesterday after initially quoting him at 6-1.

Punters may complain that if a firm takes a view, it should stand by it and lay it, if only for five minutes, although it is hard to see how Hills ever came up with their original price. Pipe's record in the Imperial Cup is outstanding, and he is also the only trainer to have claimed the £50,000 bonus put up by Sunningdale, the race sponsors, every year for a horse which can win the Imperial and then any race at the Cheltenham Festival the following week.

Blowing Wind is clearly being targeted at the same lucrative double, and will be ridden by Tony McCoy, the champion jockey. The best price against

Blowing Wind this morning is 7-1 with the 10-1, but that too is unlikely to survive the first frantic seconds of trading.

Pipe will also go to the Festival with a predictably strong team — one of his horses, Tamarindo, is entered in no fewer than eight of the meeting's 20 races, and would not doubt be in the other 12 if he were qualified. In the Gold Cup, a race which has so far eluded him, he will be represented by Cyborg and Challenger Du Lac, but the strength of the challenge facing his runners increased yesterday when it was confirmed that Sunny Bay, the Hennessy Gold Cup winner, will take his place in the field a week tomorrow.

Charlie Brooks, his trainer, will also be two-handed, with Countdown Better, who was third behind Imperial Call two seasons ago, also expected to

take part following a useful piece of work with Sunny Bay on Monday. Sunny Bay is best priced at 11-1 for the Gold Cup with William Hill, while Countdown Better is among the outsiders at 66-1.

At the other end of the market, See More Business and Dorans Pride are disputing favouritism, although if the Irish runners — particularly Istabraq and Florida Pete — go well on the first two days of the meeting, Dorans Pride will surely find himself a bookmaker's favourite, as bookmakers with multiple-bet liabilities try to reduce their potential loss.

The renewed strength of the Irish challenge is clear from the prices offered about the total number of winners the visitors will have. Ladbrokes issued their list yesterday, and make either four or five winners their favourite, at 5-1. No winners at

all is reckoned a 50-1 chance, while the Irish bookie Sean Graham is even more bullish, at 66-1 about a blank.

Another Gold Cup candidate, The Grey Monk, was also the subject of encouraging reports yesterday, although it is still not certain that Gordon Richards' chaser will shake off the effects of a virus in time to line up for the race.

"He's schooled over three fences this morning and done three little bits of work," Nicky Richards, the trainer's son, said, "but whether he gets to Cheltenham or not is still another matter." Punters will thus be wary of taking the 10-1 against The Grey Monk which is offered by Ladbrokes.

Ladbrokes takeover of Coral likely to be referred to Monopolies & Mergers Commission, page 20

Carlisle card under threat

PROSPECTS for tomorrow's meeting at Carlisle have deteriorated and the course will hold an inspection at 4.30 today.

The course has been waterlogged after heavy rain and snow and clerk of the course Jonnie Fenwick-Clemm, who walked the track yesterday afternoon,

reported the going as heavy, soft in places.

Fiddlers Pike, the oldest horse to run this season, has been retired, Rosemary Henderson's 17-year-old was fifth in the 1994 Grand National. Henderson said: "He's off team chasing on Sunday and is also going evening."

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Mr Busker
(Bangor-On-Dee 4.20)
NB: Elton Leader
(Southwell 4.10)

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Results

EXETER
2.20: 1. LOVELACE (M. Griffith) 14-1; 2. Golden Lily 20-1; 3. Boney 8-1; 10. 3-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 11. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 12. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 13. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 14. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 15. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 16. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 17. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 18. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 19. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 20. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 21. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 22. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 23. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 24. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 25. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 26. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 27. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 28. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 29. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 30. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 31. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 32. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 33. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 34. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 35. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 36. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 37. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 38. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 39. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 40. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 41. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 42. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 43. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 44. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 45. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 46. 1-1 for Sunlight 10-1; 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Mannix decides to leave Sale

Rugby Union

SALE have put their New Zealand outside-half Simon Mannix on the transfer list after a disagreement. The 26-year-old goalkicker, who becomes eligible to play for England in 1999, has almost certainly played his last game for the Manchester club, who meet Wasps in the Telford Cup semi-finals later this month.

Mannix, whose stand-off place in the side for last night's Allied Dunbar Premiership match at Newcastle was taken by his compatriot, Shane Howarth, has been a key figure in Sale's success over the last two years.

He helped them to the Pilkington Cup final last May and was in the side that beat West Hartlepool last month to take them closer to a return to Twickenham.

Sale's chief executive, Howard Thomas, said: "Simon Mannix is a top-class player. Unfortunately, there are certain issues over which he and the rugby management could not agree."

The move is certain to alert a number of leading clubs, with

Saracens expected to lead the way. They need a replacement for outside-half Michael Lynagh, who retires at the end of the season.

Mannix said: "It is a shame I'll be leaving because I have enjoyed my time playing rugby in the North-West and my family and I were made to feel very welcome by both the club and its supporters. I wish the club every success in the future."

Wasps' rugby director, Nigel Melville, yesterday challenged one of the most partisan crowds in English rugby to give the England captain, Lawrence Dallaglio, his second rough ride to successive matches.

The Wasps flanker was called "Judas" by a handful of the crowd at Saracens last Sunday and he can expect more of the same from occupants of King'sholm's Shed tonight, when the champions visit Gloucester.

But Melville said: "We like the hostile environment and hope we can have the great satisfaction of winning away from home."

With Gloucester just in the top half of the table despite not playing for over two weeks and Wasps toiling in 10th place, there appears to be little meaning to the game.

But Dallaglio denied this, saying: "It's important to finish as high as possible. We've never come lower than seventh in the 10 seasons of League rugby and we want don't want to let down that fine record."

Gloucester - who have won six of their last seven home League games, but have beaten Wasps only three times in 15 meetings - and Wasps both restore international threequarters after long-term groin injuries.

Philippe Saint-André, the former France captain, returns for Gloucester after having one short outing in January, also against Wasps, when he suffered a recurrence of his November problem.

Richard Hill, Gloucester's rugby director, said: "Philippe has been struggling for four months and we were not going to rush him after the setback in January."

The Ireland centre Rob Henderson is back in Wasps' midfield for the first time since December, having confirmed his recovery in Paris last Saturday.

Henderson's recall means that Nick Greenstock moves to the wing, while Wasps also start with hooker Trevor Leota and back-row forward Johnny Ions.

Keighley call on Crooks as coach

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

KEIGHLEY have replaced their coach, John Kain, four matches into the First Division season, paving the way for the return to the game of Lee Crooks. The former Great Britain forward is set to be named today as the new boss of a team without a League win this year.

Crooks has been out of the game since his contract as an assistant coach at Castleford expired at the end of last season: he had retired as a player midway through the campaign.

Crooks has been desperate to get his start in coaching, but last night's month turned down an offer from the ambitious amateur club, the Oxford Cavaliers, to coach them on a part-time basis, in the hope that a full-time role would crop up elsewhere.

He now appears to have beaten John Joyner, who was replaced as Castleford coach last year, for the difficult job of reviving Keighley, whose recent financial crises have weakened their playing staff in the point where they are struggling to compete in the First Division. Kain is likely to stay at Keighley in some capacity.

All four games so far this season have been lost, culmi-

nating in a 50-12 thrashing at Dewsbury on Sunday.

The Castleford-based referee, Steve Presley, has been left on the sidelines for the quarter-finals of the Challenge Cup this weekend, after complaints from Halifax about his handling of their tie against the London Broncos in the last round.

Halifax lost 21-18 in a match of several controversial tries, after which two London forwards, Terry Matterson and Peter Gill, were sent letters from the League warning them about their future conduct.

A five-match tour by New Zealand will bring the British season to an end with an international flavour in November.

A meeting of the Test-playing nations in Australia has confirmed that the scheduled World Cup in Australasia this autumn will be postponed until the situation in the southern hemisphere - where a unified competition kicks off this weekend - has settled down.

Huddersfield, Watford and Bolton have been earmarked as the likely venues for the three Tests, but the KRWs have warned that they will be reluctant to play any extra games outside the code's heartland as missionary exercises.

Scottish rule thwarted by Newman

Bowls

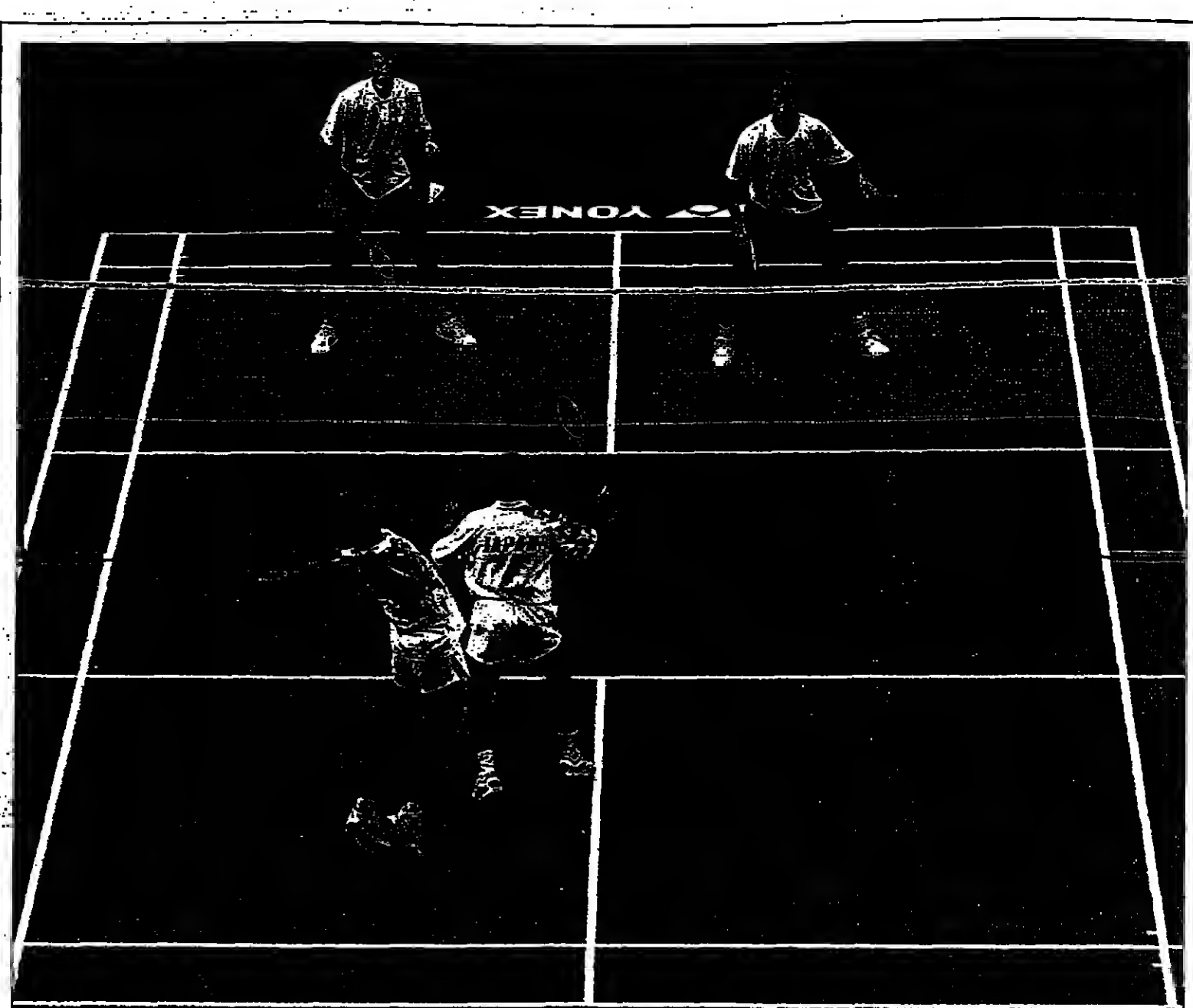
ROBERT NEWMAN prevented a Scottish clean sweep at the British Home Championships in Swansea yesterday when the Reading bowler won the indoor singles title by beating Sandy Syne 21-11.

The Scottish champion from Coatbridge took an early 5-2 lead after four ends but then lost two successive maximum fours on the next two ends to allow Newman, the 22-year-old from the Whiteknights club, to jump into a 10-5 lead.

The Scot did narrow the gap to 10-13 after 12 ends but then Newman stepped up a gear and a run of one, two and three took him 19-10 ahead after 15 ends and a double two ends later sealed his 21-11 win.

Scotland claimed the opening two finals at the championships where they captured both the pairs and triples titles. In the triples, Willie and Darren Burnett with Doug Farquharson, from Arbroath, beat another father and son pairing, Harry and John Price, with Stephen Rees, 24-14.

In the pairs, Richard Corrie, the holder of the Scottish and world pairs titles, added the British version for a unique treble when he came from behind with Willie Galloway to beat David Harding and Jason Greenslade, from Cardiff, 19-18.



Fumihiko Machida and Seichi Watanabe, the Japanese pair, go on the attack against Denmark's Kasper Fangel and Kasper Oedum during their doubles match in the qualifying event of the All-England Open Badminton Championships in Birmingham yesterday. Photograph: Peter Jay

Umpires hasten Indian win

Crickets

India 257 & 484-4 dec
Australia 328 & 168
India won by 179 runs

CONTRVERSIAL umpiring combined with potent Indian spin bowling sent Australia crashing to defeat yesterday in the first Test in Madras.

The tourists, facing a stiff victory target of 348, collapsed from their overnight score of 31 for 3 to 168 all out 45 minutes before tea on the final day.

The leg-spinner Anil Kumble wrecked Australia's second innings with 4 for 51 to finish with eight wickets in the match. The left-arm spinner Venkatesh Raju clipped in with 3 for 26 while the off-spinner Rajesh

Chaubhan made his mark with 2 for 66.

India's 17th win in their last 26 home Tests was, however, marred by four controversial umpiring decisions in the morning session which ended Australia's resistance. Three of the dubious decisions were made by the English umpire, George Sharp, to leave Australia tottering at 96 for 7 at lunch.

It was the Indian umpire Srinivas Venkataraghavan, however, who began the slide when he ruled Mark Waugh caught at short leg off Kumble when television replays indicated the ball may have gone off the pads. The usually unruffled Waugh, who scored 18, stood his ground for a while before walking off with Australia 54 for 4.

Then the nightwatchman Paul Reiffel was given out caught at gully by Sharp when replays showed the ball hit his front boot. It soon became 91 for 6 when Sharp ruled Ricky Ponting leg before to Venkatesh Raju for two despite replays indicating the ball clearly pitched outside the leg stump.

Australia suffered their worst blow off the last delivery before lunch when Steve Waugh fell to another dubious decision by Sharp on 27. He played forward to Venkatesh Raju and the ball again appeared to go off the boot to Rahul Dravid at short leg, who won his appeal for a catch.

Ian Healy, the top scorer with 90 in the first innings, delayed the end with another de-

fiant knock of 32 not out. Healy put on 57 for the eighth wicket with Shane Warne, who made 35, before Chaubhan set Australia back again with two wickets off successive balls, with Warne caught by Kumble and then Gavin Robertson bowled first ball.

Final play, India won 257.
AUSTRALIA - First innings 257: 1. I. Healy (c) 90, 2. S. Waugh (c) 27, 3. P. Reiffel 18, 4. M. Waugh 18, 5. R. Ponting 18, 6. S. Warne 35, 7. G. Robertson 18, 8. A. Kumble 18, 9. R. Chhabra 18, 10. R. Dravid 18, 11. S. Jayaram 18, 12. S. Tendulkar 18, 13. S. Gavaskar 18, 14. S. Kulkarni 18, 15. S. Kulkarni 18, 16. S. Kulkarni 18, 17. S. Kulkarni 18, 18. S. Kulkarni 18, 19. S. Kulkarni 18, 20. S. Kulkarni 18, 21. S. Kulkarni 18, 22. S. Kulkarni 18, 23. S. Kulkarni 18, 24. S. Kulkarni 18, 25. S. Kulkarni 18, 26. S. Kulkarni 18, 27. S. Kulkarni 18, 28. S. Kulkarni 18, 29. S. Kulkarni 18, 30. S. Kulkarni 18, 31. S. Kulkarni 18, 32. S. Kulkarni 18, 33. S. Kulkarni 18, 34. S. Kulkarni 18, 35. S. Kulkarni 18, 36. S. Kulkarni 18, 37. S. Kulkarni 18, 38. S. Kulkarni 18, 39. S. Kulkarni 18, 40. S. Kulkarni 18, 41. S. Kulkarni 18, 42. S. Kulkarni 18, 43. S. Kulkarni 18, 44. S. Kulkarni 18, 45. S. Kulkarni 18, 46. S. Kulkarni 18, 47. S. Kulkarni 18, 48. S. Kulkarni 18, 49. S. Kulkarni 18, 50. S. 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Rangers to let £3m Gascoigne go

Football

By Mark Pierson

PAUL GASCOIGNE'S days at Rangers were looking numbered last night after the Scottish champions agreed to sell their England midfielder to Crystal Palace for £3m.

Although the deal is far from done and Gascoigne himself has not even talked to Palace yet, it is clear that Dick Advocaat, who will take over from Walter Smith as Rangers manager in the summer, does not see him as part of his plans.

The proposed transfer has been agreed with Mark Goldberg, Palace's prospective new owner, who believes Gascoigne and Terry Venables, his former manager with Tottenham and England, can play major roles in the south London club's future.

Goldberg, who has an agreement to buy Palace by the end of the year provided he can raise the required £30m, yesterday gave Venables more time to think over an offer to become manager. However, he said that the signing of Gascoigne was not necessarily dependent on Venables' decision.

Goldberg has long been an admirer of Gascoigne - Palace's interest in him was first revealed in *The Independent* last October - and plans to meet the player early next week to discuss the move.

However, the prospect of joining a club currently bottom of the Premiership may have limited appeal for Gascoigne, who is currently out injured with a calf injury. Playing for a team embroiled in a relegation battle and without a home League win all season is not likely to help his preparations for this summer's World Cup.

Mel Stein, Gascoigne's advisor, last night played down talk of a move to Palace. "They may well have agreed a price in principle, but certainly Paul hasn't agreed to anything whatsoever," he said.

"Paul's view is that he simply wants to get himself fit first before he focuses on anything and at the moment he's very much a Rangers player. He's made no firm decision to leave Rangers, and certainly won't be making a firm decision to leave Rangers to go anywhere until he's fit. And that's going to be at least a week or so."

Rangers have agreed a fee of £3m, with further cash based on appearances. However, if the deal goes through it could cost Palace some £9m. Gascoigne agreed a new contract with Rangers last summer believed to be worth £40,000 per week over three years. A similar deal with Palace would commit the club to £6m in wages plus the fee.

Bearing in mind Gascoigne's poor fitness record - and the fact that Palace's prospects of Premiership survival this season have been hit hard by the lengthy absences of other injury-prone big-money signings -

there will be many who will question the wisdom of the move.

Goldberg and Ron Noades, the Palace chairman, have been at odds over the future direction of the club and it was not clear last night whether Noades and the current manager, Steve Coppell, approve of the Gascoigne deal.

Noades had previously insisted that Goldberg himself should largely fund the move for Venables because he was not prepared to commit the club to expenditure it could not meet in the event of the Goldberg takeover not going through.

Goldberg - who wants Coppell to stay at the club in a backroom capacity if Venables takes over - said last night that he would not sign Gascoigne "without first consulting Terry, the chairman Ron Noades and Steve Coppell".

Goldberg is believed to have discussed the Palace manager's position with Newcastle's John Barnes, but his first choice is still Venables, whose contract as coach of Australia expires this summer.

"I believe that with at least one more meeting, and possibly two, I will be able to persuade



Gascoigne: Palace interest

Terry to join us," Goldberg said. "I do not want to rush him into making a decision and end up with him saying no. We are making progress all the time."

Graham aims to join the big spenders, page 26



Pitch battle: England play Barbados alongside the stretch of prepared ground where they will face the West Indies in the fifth Test, which starts tomorrow. It promises to be the best batting pitch of the series. Photograph: David Ashdown

Spicy pitches prove scary for tourists seeking edge

IN CRICKET nothing is more raked over, analysed, verbally dissected and generally worried about than the 22 yards of prepared turf known as the pitch. But whether they are fast or slow, bouncy or low, help spin or seam, pitches are a glorious uncertainty over which only the very best tend to have regular dominion.

Which is why the West Indies have risked playing England on helpful pitches, backing players such as Brian Lara, Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh to outperform England's key players, a play that has seen them go 2-1 up in the series with two Tests to play.

One of the great myths about the Caribbean is that the pitches are fast and boun-

cy. In fact apart from Barbados - venue for the fifth Test tomorrow - the opposite is true, and most tend to be sluggish, the ball bouncing less evenly as the game wears on.

This tendency, especially after their bowlers' poor showing in Pakistan, left the West Indies with a dilemma. With two ageing but accurate fast bowlers, and a largely unhelped crop of young quicks, there was no point in baying the slow, bland pitches that brought three draws against India last year.

Instead, knowing that Ambrose is still one of the best bowlers in the world when there is something for him in the pitch and that Walsh is not far behind, the surfaces have been under prepared. Although in the

case of the first match in Trinidad, this was more from force of circumstance - after the first Test was abandoned - than by design.

Playing on spicy pitches has been a bold ploy and one that could so easily have backfired had England won the first - as they indeed should have done - as well as the second Test in Port of Spain. As it was, both teams left with a win apiece, with Ambrose and Angus Fraser, both written off in the months before the tour, reborn as match-winners.

In Guyana, however, the West Indies got the conditions just right. In Trinidad, the grass on the pitches had produced both lateral as well as vertical movement. But while this assisted Fraser

Derek Pringle, in Bridgetown, explains how the West Indies have gambled successfully in preparing the local turf

as much as Ambrose and Walsh, the cracks and broken top of the Bourda pitch helped mainly the West Indies pair.

It is a variation at which local tall fast bowlers, with their extra height and pace, excel far more than their English counterparts, who cannot drive the batsmen on to the back foot often enough to gain advantage.

Even when conditions are dusty, the home bowlers are far more effective than spinners, who, despite the occasional turning wicket, have rarely excelled in the Caribbean.

But if the pitches have not looked much worse than previous tours, a fact borne out by Fraser, now on his third tour, the balls, with their big, rope-like seams (a throwback to the 1989 ball that caused a furore when it was used in county cricket), have perhaps accentuated the variations present in the surface.

So far the batting, apart from Lara's glorious 93 in the last Test, has been anything but free-flowing. But if the popular conception of cricket is that people want to see batsman

score runs, the tourists will have better "lightning" at the "city" tussles between bat and ball so far seen in the series.

For those who would rather see runs than results, however, the pitches have been nothing short of bowlers' paradises. Unsurprisingly, it is a view that does not hold much truck with bowlers, and speaking about the strip England had just played Barbados on - a game that barely went into a third innings - a watching Fraser said: "People tell me that it's a good pitch. Well if it is, it has produced a dull game."

But if that sounds like the hard-done-by rantings of a cantankerous old warhorse, it is probably shared by England's batsmen, who know that although their personal averages

would benefit from better conditions, England's chances of winning the series will not.

The trouble is, now that they have got their noses in front, the West Indies are bound to risk less on the pitches than they have done over the last few games. It is an irony that will not escape the openers, Stuart Williams and Sherwin Campbell. They were both dropped by the West Indies for the Barbados Test, a venue that will probably provide the best batting pitch of the series.

Yet if those selected in their place, the Barbadian Philo Wallace and Guyanese Clayton

Lambert, are perhaps fortunate to have missed batting on the earlier pitches, cream still has a habit of rising to the top. Like it or not, the best batsmen on either side have all played significant innings, with Lara and Alec Stewart outstanding.

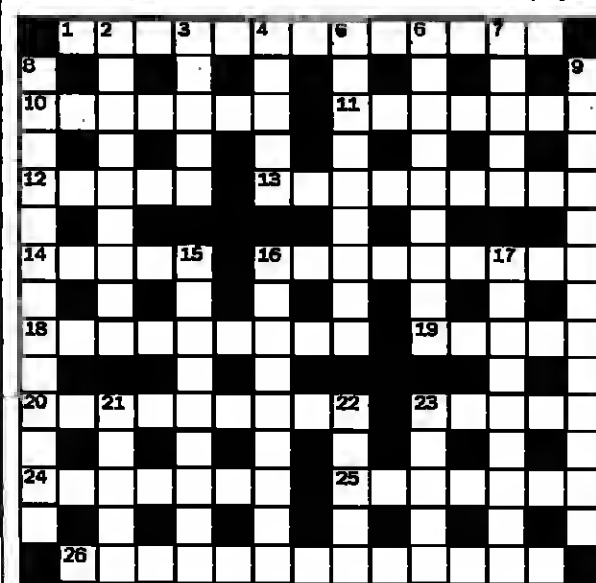
But if many would cherish seeing Stewart repeat his feat of four years ago when he scored a century in each innings, England's real chance lies in taking 20 West Indian wickets. If the Kensington Oval track is as good as local opinion suggests, that may be rather trickier than in previous Tests in the series.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3555, Wednesday 11 March

By Aquila

Thursday's Solution



UPSIDE DOWN
MUSIC
BEAST
EARTH
OCEAN
TO THE
SPONSOR
EARTH
PARKER
AFTER
BAGS
A RE
BANKING
LIT
ELDER

- ACROSS**
- High tars used to bring people round (8-5)
 - Volume of a passenger-vehicle (7)
 - Cooked meal everybody knocked back, using thin plate (7)
 - Witch is retired close to lake (5)
 - How leading-men may be taken on board? (2-7)
 - Traded in softwood, square-ended (5)
 - Commonplace parking-space (9)
 - Beer I chat about but never touch? (9)
 - He run out leading India? (5)
 - A long way going by air, lorry and a railway (9)

- United idols turning out (5)
 - The Independent, for example, given eagle form in it? (7)
 - Hooker, in the second half, takes a can of hair protein (7)
 - Mimics kicking man's posterior (13)
- DOWN**
- European summit letting some people down? (4-5)
 - Flag of Lincoln standing between two lakes (5)
 - Kids comic perhaps? (5)
 - Expensive coating presented to winning lady at Wimbledon (4-5)
 - Charge made, these days, to go over embassy (9)

- Here in Oklahoma, overturned baggage needs key (5)
- Examination fee (13)
- If this is served at table, keep sweet (6-7)
- Business style, to have dealings with famous person (5-4)
- Particular stars in early elections in America (9)
- Stuff of English composer in pure composition (9)
- Splitter of beams? (5)
- You know half will turn out in area of rushes (5)
- Support for a proud walk (5)

McGeechan breaks through impasse

Rugby Union

By Chris Hewatt

KEITH BARWELL, the big bad wolf of Northampton, was enjoying life on the piste yesterday, which was quite a coincidence given that his club has spent the last week and a half careering down the slippery slope to public humiliation. In the absence of his multi-millionaire boss, Ian McGeechan took the only sane decision open to him and unilaterally called time on the political squabble that has reduced English rugby to a laughing stock.

McGeechan, one of the most respected coaches in the world game, intervened on behalf of Paul Grayson, Tim Rodber and Matt Dawson, the Saints' internationals at the centre of the latest spat between club and country. Unless Barwell decries otherwise from his temporary lair in the French Alps, the Franks will make themselves available for this summer's tour of the southern hemisphere and save Clive Woodward, the England coach, the trouble of dropping them from the remaining Five Nations matches with Scotland and Ireland.

"Clive has said he will not pick anyone unwilling to tour and we as a club are not prepared to allow our players to be isolated in this matter,"

McGeechan said. "Nobody wants to jeopardise their international chances. I would fully expect Northampton players to be included in the England squad for the game at Murrayfield on Sunday week."

There was no response from either Woodward or the Rugby Football Union last night, but there was no question of the Twickenham hierarchy rejecting McGeechan's common-sense attempt at conciliation. Grayson is now virtually certain to retain his place at outside-half - injuries to Mike Catt and Alex King leave the stand-off cupboard worryingly bare - and Rodber, playing his best rugby for some years, will challenge Tony Diprose for the vacant No 8 slot.

Ten days ago - 10 days that seem like a decade - Barwell threw the whole England issue into the melting pot by banning his players from this summer's ill-conceived tour of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Woodward reacted in gun-slinger fashion, firing off a salvo of threats and ultimatums that left no squad member in any doubt as to the consequences of withdrawal from the trip. As a result, all 12 Premiership clubs became embroiled in yet another round of shadow boxing with the union.

Although Barwell upped the ante by stating that rugby needed "a bloody good punch-up"

to sort itself out, there was no escaping the fact that the entire England squad had signed up for the tour. His precipitate action left Grayson and company in the mire and pushed the clubs into a corner they would much rather have avoided. In short, he handed the RFU a public relations triumph on a platter.

McGeechan tried his level best to defend Barwell yesterday, saying: "Keith wanted to make the point that the players' interests were not being properly looked after and his sole purpose was to create a basis for discussion. Clive himself has admitted that this summer's tour is far from ideal." However, Northampton sources indicated that the coach was flabbergasted by the militancy of Barwell's stand and decided that if the owner was unwilling to break the impasse, he would have to do so himself.

Several club managements, Bath and Saracens included, were holding meetings with their players yesterday to appraise them of the latest political situation. "Northampton's climb-down means this particular issue is done and dusted," said one director of rugby. "There will be other issues, though. The next big fight will be over next season's England contracts, which will be put to the players in September."

Rugby union, page 27

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